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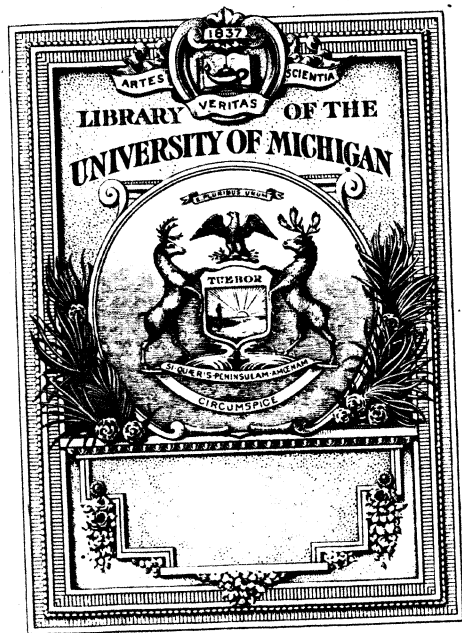
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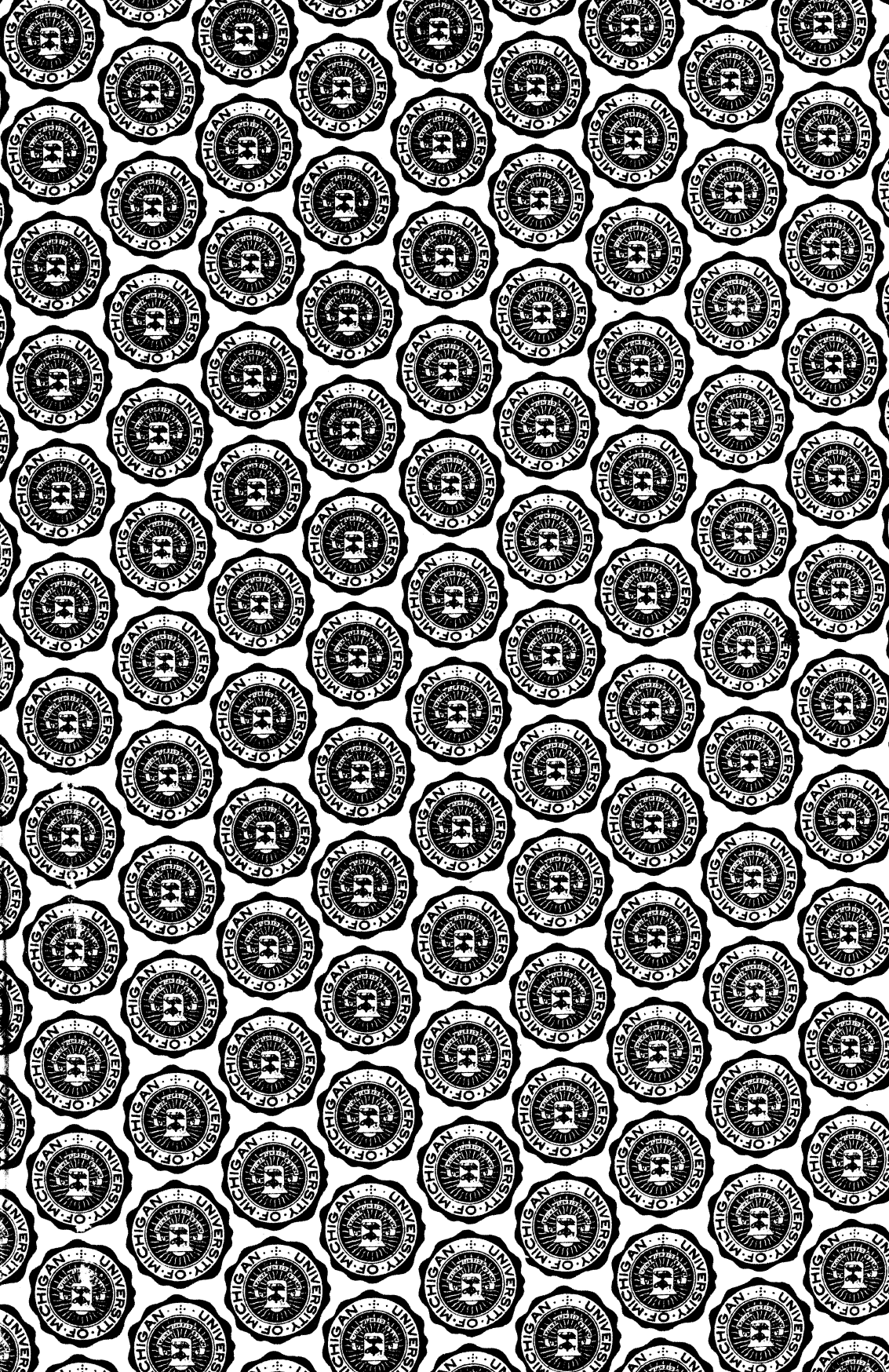
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THE WINDSOR MAGAZINE

AN ILLUSTRATED MONTHLY
FOR MEN AND WOMEN

VOL. LXVI

JUNE TO NOVEMBER, 1927

WARD, LOCK & CO., LIMITED
LONDON AND MELBOURNE

1927

THE WINDSOR MAGAZINE.

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THE JUNE 1927

WINDSOR

THEATRICAL ROOMS
AT THE WINDSOR
OF LONDON



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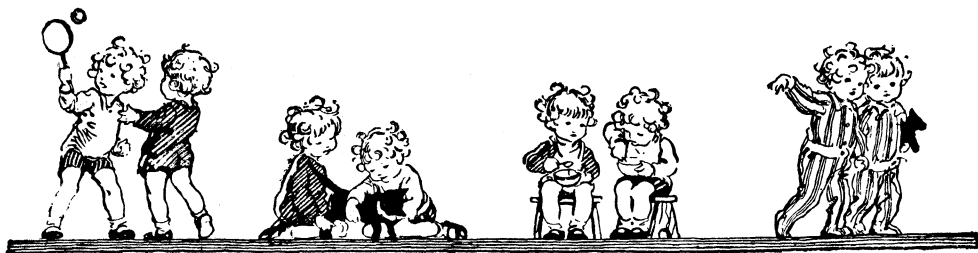
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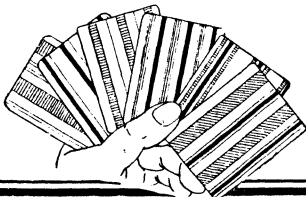
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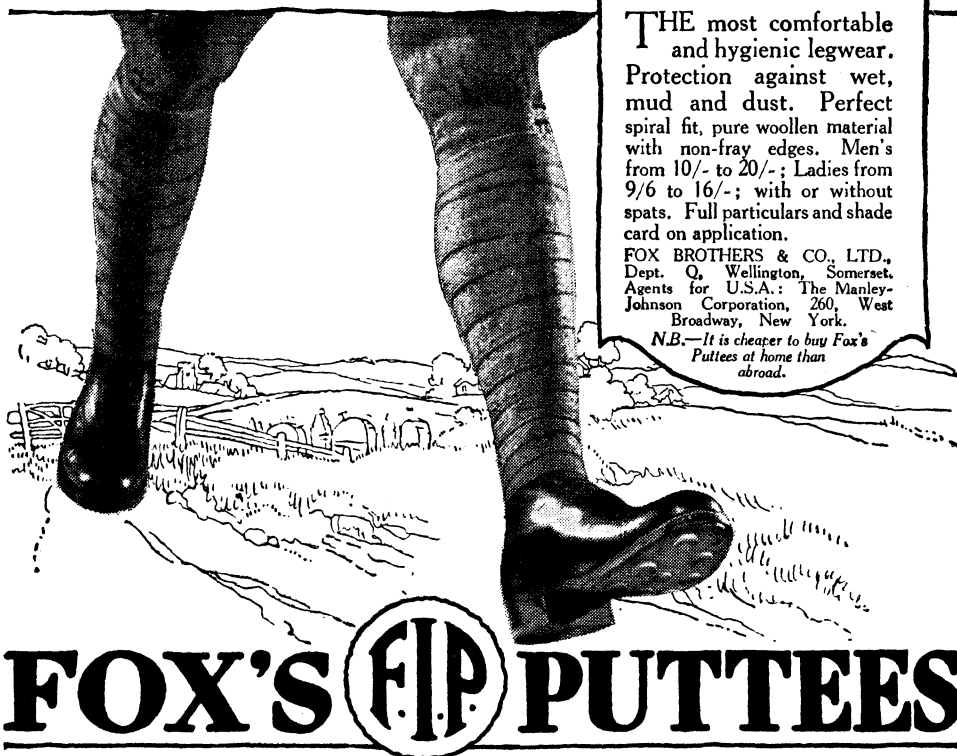
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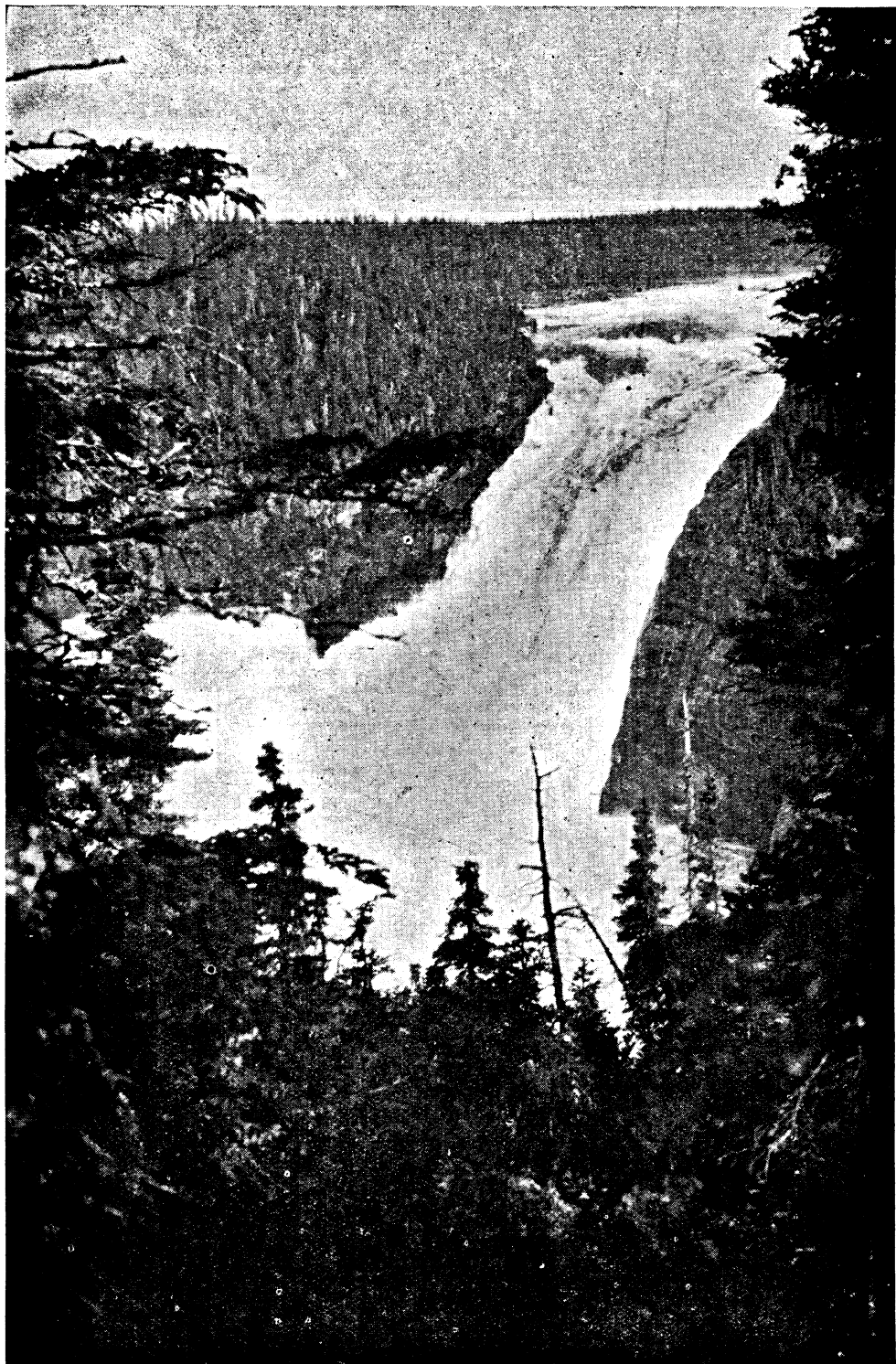


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NORTH AMERICA'S SECOND GREATEST CATARACT, THE GRAND FALLS OF LABRADOR, TWICE AS HIGH AS NIAGARA.

Photograph by Varick Frissell. See article on p. 58.



"'Hilda?' he exclaimed, 'I suppose some people would think this funny. I don't.' And he handed his daughter a newspaper cutting."

HIS LEADING : LADY :

By MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLER

"**L**AURA is a dear woman, and a shining example to us all. But clever? No, my dear, Laura is *not* clever."

"You don't call the Duchess stupid?"

"Good heavens, no! But I've known many a stupid woman make a better thing of her girls' lives than Laura has managed to do. Look at the two elder daughters?"

"You mean Lady Lettice and Lady Susie?"

"Of course I do. They both made very

bad marriages; Lettice to that pompous young M.P. from the north; and Susie, who is really very pretty, is in India, married to a penniless soldier."

"What an odd thing."

"All their mother's fault! Yet not only is she a duchess, and that still counts—men are such snobs—but she's got this splendid old place in which she could have given a series of such delightful 'young' parties. I don't mean the sort of thing that's going on

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this time. Private theatricals, matrimonially speaking, are never any use, and just think of the 'detrimentals' who are here just now!"

"Perhaps Lady Hilda will do better for herself?"

"She may. But I shall be very surprised if she does. She's a clever little thing——"

"Pretty too," interjected the other lady.

"Pretty in a way; *piquante* one would have called it in old days; and that isn't beauty, my dear! It seems to me that Laura falls between two stools. Her daughters aren't the demure, old-fashioned girls that some modern men fancy, and neither are they like the naughty, bold young minxes that carry off all the elder sons."

"Young men are so spoilt nowadays. I shouldn't care to have the Duke for a father-in-law——"

"Neither should I!" And then both ladies tittered.

"Listeners never hear any good of themselves."

The Duchess ruefully reminded herself of the old saying, as she unwillingly overheard the short conversation between two of her guests; one, Lady Brislington, known since her girlhood, and the other, Mrs. Chichester, a new acquaintance who was a friend of Lady Brislington. The gossips were sunning themselves on the terrace of the Castle, and a large screen had been put up to shelter them from the east wind. Their hostess, meaning to join them, had slipped through the long French window of one of the smaller sitting-rooms, just behind the screen, when her attention had been caught by the sound of her own name.

For a few moments she stood quite still, scarcely breathing. It would be so unpleasant for them all three were she to be discovered! But at last, feeling mortified, and not a little hurt, she cautiously pushed open the French window, and stepped in-doors again.

Was it really true that she had been a foolish, neglectful mother? Could she have done anything to prevent Lettice, her cherished eldest child, from marrying that tiresome Gerald Armitage? As for Susie—well, there had been a tragic little episode known only to her, Susie's mother, and to Susie herself, and it was natural that the girl's heart had been caught at the rebound by that fine, if penniless, young fellow, Captain Geoffrey Brentlaw, V.C.

And then, for she was a very honest

woman, honest with herself as few women are, the Duchess admitted, with a sigh, that she might in very truth have done a very great deal more than she had done, especially with regard to her eldest daughter. She could have filled the Castle with what those two worldly women would call "the right kind of young man." But, like most modern mothers who still feel themselves quite young as they approach middle age, she had never thought of her little Lettice as "grown up" till Lettice had already lost her heart to the man the Duke called "that pompous prig." Also, the Duchess was very much devoted wife as well as devoted mother; and both she and the Duke, in their very different ways, were unworldly, neither inclined to fix an eye on the main chance, especially where their children were concerned.

Anxiously the Duchess ran over in her mind the names of the young men who were now staying in the Castle in connection with a charity performance of that old favourite, "A Pantomime Rehearsal," which was to be acted in what was called the big ballroom in about ten days. With a certain shock of surprise she realised that not one of them could be regarded as being, matrimonially speaking, eligible. When she had talked the party over with her son Algy, all she had stipulated was that the young men invited for what must be an exceptionally long visit should be "nice."

And nice they certainly all were—simple, well-behaved, pleasant, young fellows, but not an "elder son" among them!

With a rueful smile she realised that it was this fact which had inspired her friend, Agnes Brislington's, spiteful remarks. Lady Brislington's daughter, Rosie, was staying here too, and no doubt Rosie's mother felt it hard that in a ducal house-party there was not even one young man whom a careful mother would welcome as a son-in-law.

Then the Duchess reminded herself, with a feeling of relief, that her own daughter, Lady Hilda, was still very young, not yet eighteen, and that the last thing the girl seemed to think about just now was love and marriage. In fact, not long ago she had told her father that though she meant to be married *some day*, she intended to have a great deal of fun first! Lady Hilda's idea of fun had always been private theatricals: indeed she thought of little else, and most of her evenings, during her infrequent visits to London, were spent at the theatre.

Feeling in no mood to join her critics on the terrace, the Duchess made her way to the

big ballroom, and she stayed her steps by the half-open door.

She could see without being seen, and she smiled, in spite of herself, as she saw the scene of happy confusion which reigned therein. The whole cast of "A Pantomime Rehearsal" was gathered together, and their youthful hostess, clad in an unbecoming holland overall, stood on a ladder, engaged in putting up on the stage which filled the farther side of the room a curtain which certainly followed the stage direction, "Forest Cloth. Unfinished, and execrably painted in." But as soon as she saw who stood looking through the door, the girl hopped off the ladder, and rushed across to her mother.

"Bob Walleston has telephoned to say that he can't come; but that if we don't mind, his greatest friend, Lord Elstone, will take his place, and be our producer. Now that would be simply splendid, for Lord Elstone has even produced a real play! May I send a telephone message saying that we shall be delighted to have him? And, mother? I should like him to come to-day if he can—it's so important; we can't make a real start without a producer! It's been bad enough waiting for Bob Walleston; he *has* let us down——"

"Lord Elstone?"

The Duchess hesitated. What was it she had heard about Lord Elstone? And then she remembered having been told that he was an eccentric kind of young man, passionately devoted to every form of art, and so remarkable an amateur actor that more than once, under an assumed name, he had taken part in a big London production. Also that, though enormously rich, he took no part in any of the usual amusements common to his class; he neither danced, shot, nor raced.

A little anxiously she wondered if the Duke would approve of this stage-struck young man being asked to the Castle.

"Well, mother? It's all right—isn't it?" The girl laughed. "Your dear Lady Brislington will be delighted——"

"Why should she be? I shouldn't think Lord Elstone, from what I've heard of him, is her sort at all."

"Can't you guess, mother? *The Weekly Rattle* said last week that he was the richest bachelor in England! What a chance for Rosie Brislington!"

"I certainly shouldn't ask Lord Elstone to join our party to please Rosie's mother," and the Duchess spoke in so sharp a tone that her daughter felt surprised.

"Then he may come, mother?"

"I suppose he may——"

Though she said the words a little doubtfully, she smiled into the girl's eager face.

Half an hour later the Duchess received a telephone message to the effect that Lord Elstone thanked her Grace for her kind invitation, and would do himself the pleasure of motoring down to the Castle in time to dress for dinner.

As she glanced at the courteous words written on the telephone slip, she told herself that her coming guest, whatever his oddities, had nice, old-fashioned manners. Even so her heart quaked a little, as she approached the Duke's own room in order to tell him of the coming addition to their house-party.

"What Hilda calls the 'producer' of the play, Bob Walleston, has fallen out," she explained. "And Lord Elstone is coming to take his place."

"Young Elstone? I thought he banned ordinary society? And yet he's a man of parts, Laura! Only the other day I told him he ought to go in for politics."

"I had no idea you knew him, James." She felt genuinely astonished.

"I come across him now and again at the club."

To the Duke there was but one club—the Carlton.

"The story goes," he went on, "that his father made him promise never to give up the club, and he keeps his word. I always like meeting that young chap; he's really clever, and I was fond, in a way, of poor old Elstone. Funny that a man like that should have had so 'artistic' a son."

"Hilda says he's the most wonderful actor——"

"So I've heard," said the Duke carelessly. "But if that's really true he's fated to play only a certain kind of part, for he's hideously ugly."

"In what way ugly?" asked the Duchess with interest.

"Let me see? Well! He's short, stumpy, fat rather than thin, and his hair's red. But he has a clever, good-tempered face, and his funny little eyes always have a twinkle in them. That's the best I can do for you."

"Your best is very good!" cried the Duchess. "I'm glad to know what he's like; I was expecting an Adonis."

At that the Duke shouted with laughter. "You would have had a shock!"

"When one thinks of a young man as a

good amateur actor one does think of him as an Adonis, James," and she laughed too. "I'm glad he's clever," she went on, "I

"Elstone can do what so few men can do, young or old—make a humorous fighting speech," went on the Duke.



"Lady Hilda was perpetually on the brink of tears, though she felt sure no one suspected the horrid fact."

do get so bored with most young men."

"He did quite good work at the last General Election. I think even you might have known that!"

"Now that you say so, I remember it."

"All you tell me makes me feel very glad we're getting him down!" she exclaimed. "I had a notion that he'd be very 'high-brow,' and that he'd frighten me, at any rate, out of my wits."

"The 'high-brow' isn't born who would frighten *you*," he observed dryly; then, "Instead of going off to-morrow, I think I'll

"A good many girls would give their eyes to have him—if he's even a quarter as rich as he's said to be."



"To-night every member of the cast, as well as the producer himself, felt very nervous."

stay on another couple of days. I'd like a word or two with young Elstone. He's at the parting of the ways, just twenty-seven."

"He ought to marry."

"Only a blind girl would have him," observed the Duke.

"I think that young man has his own weather eye very much open. Luckily there'll be nothing of the kind going on here—and I shall be able to talk to him seriously."

"You won't see much of him," she said warningly. "Those boys and girls are in

the big ballroom all day long. I can hardly get them out of it even to take a little exercise."

"I don't think he's such a fool as some of the young men you've asked down for this idiotic show," said the Duke thoughtfully. "I'm sure I shall be able to get hold of him; now and again. Elstone's the sort of chap who's badly wanted in modern politics."

About seven o'clock that same evening the Duchess went down to the long library to greet her new guest; and, after a while, rather to her annoyance, Lady Brislington wandered in.

"I've got a lot of letters to write, Laura—I mean before dressing for dinner." And then she waited uncertainly, as a certain type of woman is apt to do. "Aren't you coming upstairs?" she asked.

"I'm coming up presently, but I'm expecting a new young man from London. Bob Walleston has fallen out, and Lord Elstone is coming to take his place."

"Lord Elstone?"

The Duchess nodded. Her little Hilda had been right, for Lady Brislington had put a surprising amount of joyful excitement into those two simple words.

"What an extraordinary thing! How did you manage to persuade him to come? He never goes *anywhere*. Have you any idea of what his fortune is?"

"None," said the Duchess sincerely. "But I know he's supposed to be a very rich man."

"Over two hundred thousand a year! Good solid real estate in New York—from his American grandmother."

The Duchess felt startled. "Poor young man! What a tremendous amount of money he must pay in income-tax."

"That's true. But still, there's plenty left. And they say he's so clever, too."

"Hush! Here he is——"

As Lord Elstone came forward into the long room, there was a pleasant, eager look on his exceedingly plain face.

"How very kind of you, Duchess, to have asked me to take my friend Bob Walleston's place!"

She told herself that he had easy, agreeable manners, nothing Bohemian or queer about them at any rate. But he certainly was a very ugly young man, though his fleshy face was redeemed by a pair of bright clear brown eyes, and a look of alert intelligence.

His hostess had just time to introduce

him to Lady Brislington, when the Duke came in.

The two men shook hands cordially. Then, at the Duke's suggestion, they went off together.

The Duchess, thinking aloud, exclaimed, "He certainly is extraordinarily ugly!"

Lady Brislington caught her up quickly. "Oh, but I never think that looks matter in a man, Laura. It's what he is that matters!"

And then the Duchess did allow herself just one little feline tap. "I should have thought that with you, my dear, it was more what a man *has* than what a man *is*," she said gently.

"Only when one's thinking of marriage," replied the other with disconcerting frankness. "Bread and cheese and kisses are all very well, but they soon pall. I can't afford to give my daughters a nice fortune apiece."

"I'll put Lord Elstone next to your little Rosie at dinner to-night," said the Duchess generously. "As I shall have old Sir George the other side of me, they'll have plenty of opportunity to make friends."

"Laura! You are kind!" And Lady Brislington's old friend was just a little touched, as well as amused, to feel a truly affectionate kiss imprinted upon her cheek.

II.

THE Duchess, having dressed, was waiting for the Duke. They were a very old-fashioned couple in some ways and, when he was at home, she always waited till he was ready, too, before going down to the great drawing-room where everyone assembled before dinner.

As she waited, Lady Hilda ran into the room with the words, "Mother! Have you seen him?"

"Seen whom?" asked the Duchess.

"Lord Elstone, of course! I do think he might have come straight to the ballroom, instead of sticking with father and Algy. He told Algy he is thinking of building a theatre—isn't that exciting?"

"I suppose it is, darling."

The Duchess was listening for the Duke's footsteps, and she hardly knew what the girl was saying.

"You won't mind our all going off to the ballroom again after dinner, will you?"

"I shall be sorry if you spoil that pretty dress, my pet."

"I'll put on the same overall I wore this afternoon. There's such a tremendous lot

to be done before we can really think of rehearsing properly——”

And then she started, for her father had come in silently, and laid a heavy hand on her slender shoulder.

“Hilda?” he exclaimed. “I suppose some people would think this funny. I don’t.” And he handed his daughter a newspaper cutting.

“What’s that?” asked the Duchess. She took the cutting out of the girl’s hand, and this is what she read:

“It is whispered that Lady Hilda Ardville, the third daughter of the Duke and Duchess of St. Andrews, will shortly become a pupil at the Royal School of Dramatic Art. Though not yet out, she is one of the cleverest amateur actresses in society. Should she follow out her present intention she will be the first duke’s daughter to adopt the profession, though of course the beautiful Lady Mona—no need to give her surname—has been acting for some years the part that she has made famous in two continents.”

“What will people say next!” she exclaimed, and the colour rushed into her face.

“Say next? You mean *print* next,” said the Duke savagely. “I’m very sorry that we’re going to have a play acted here, Hilda——”

He spoke far more sharply than he was wont to speak to his daughter.

“I can’t think why you can’t be satisfied with the many amusements and interests belonging to your own class,” he went on, not over kindly.

“There’s no harm in acting,” the girl said defiantly. “As for this paragraph, it only says what I should *like* to do, and what I *long* to do,” and then, to the mingled distress and amazement of both her parents, angry tears began rolling down her face.

“My darling Hilda,”—the Duchess rushed forward and put her arms round her daughter—“surely you don’t mean that you would like to be an actress?”

“Of course I mean that,” sobbed Lady Hilda. “Acting’s the only thing in the world I’ve ever cared for——”

“Ever cared for?” groaned the Duke. “Listen to her! Who would think her seventeen? She talks like a woman of seventy.”

The Duchess signalled to him to go away. She looked distractedly at the clock. It marked twenty-five minutes past eight: “Do go down, James! Say I’ve been delayed.”

As he left the room she turned to her daughter. “Darling, darling child!” she exclaimed, “what are we to do?”

“There’s nothing to be done,” said the girl, with a touch of mingled dignity and

sullenness. “Of course I know that it would make father terribly unhappy, so I’m not thinking of doing it, mother. But I did feel it to be too much when he began to scold me over our private theatricals! I suppose you won’t mind my joining the Windsor Strollers if they’ll have me later on? And I do hope that you’ve put me next to Lord Elstone at dinner, mother?”

The Duchess felt a pang of regret. “I wish I had,” she said vexedly. “But you yourself told me Lady Brislington regards him as what we old fogies call a great *parti*, so I’ve put little Rosie next to him.”

And then, to Lady Hilda’s surprise, her mother went off into a peal of rather hysterical laughter. “Oh, my dear,” she exclaimed, “I can’t tell you what Lord Elstone’s like! He’s frighteningly ugly. I can’t think what silly little Rosie will make of him.”

“I don’t mind a bit how ugly he is. He’s a wonderful actor. I know I shall like him!” cried Lady Hilda, dabbing her eyes.

“He’s no fool. Your father thinks very well of him,” observed the Duchess. Then she said quickly, “It’s two minutes past the half-hour. We ought by now to be sitting down to dinner——”

She took her daughter’s hand, and together they raced along the corridors, and down the great staircase, each as nimble-footed as the other. But outside the drawing-room door the Duchess composed herself, and no one, seeing her come in and greet her guests, would have known that she had looked like her little daughter’s twin, two or three moments before.

There was no time to introduce Lord Elstone to those present who were not already acquainted with him; and, after they were all seated round the wide dinner-table the Duchess was slightly amused to overhear him say, in a confidential tone, to the young lady next to him: “I’ve heard from Walleston how awfully good you are!” She also overheard the surprised, giggling, answer, “I don’t know that I’m so very *good*.” And his rather stiff, “I beg your pardon. I thought you were Lady Hilda. I was alluding to her acting.”

“How silly of me not to guess that!” And then, more naturally, Rosie Brislington added: “Hilda is splendid. And I’m quite useful, you know, in a humble way. I’ve a good memory. It’s a pity you’re only going to be the producer. We’ve heard you’re a wonderful actor, Lord Elstone?”

“I don’t know about that,” said the

young man awkwardly. "Acting's the thing I care for most in the world, and if I'd had better luck, I should have been an actor. I mean a real actor."

Rosie's mother, looking across at the young pair, told herself fondly that her dear child was evidently getting on quite well with that odd young man. What a good thing it was that he should meet, for once, a really nice girl—the sort of girl, reflected Lady Brislington, who was both old-fashioned and up to date, quite unlike the Duchess's wilful, outspoken, tomboyish little Hilda.

Rosie Brislington, though she had quiet, pretty manners, was a good deal made up, and her hair, shingled according to the very latest mode, made her look like a boy in the sixth form.

And the subject of these fond reflections ?

Rosie Brislington was well aware that her family considered it her duty to make what worldly folk describe as "a good marriage," and she had, therefore, wasted very little of her time or attention on any young man whom her mother described by the expressive old term "detrimental." She had at once realised, on her arrival at the Castle three days ago, that so far the masculine half of the party was composed solely of "detrimentals." Yet, till this evening, being a simple-natured girl, she had enjoyed the cheery, rather childish atmosphere, and once or twice she had told herself that it must be great fun to be able to throw oneself into anything as her friend Hilda threw herself into all this silly acting.

To-night she felt far from happy, for Lord Elstone was not only very ugly, but also, as she told herself plaintively, in his talk far more like an old gentleman than a young man. Most sincerely did she hope that he liked her as little as she liked him.

And this, as a matter of fact, was the case.

No doubt one reason why "A Pantomime Rehearsal" has kept such an enduring hold on the affections of amateur actors and actresses, is the fact that, apart from its own intrinsic humour, the famous little comedy provides so much simple fun to those engaged in rehearsing it.

On the other hand, from the producer's point of view, it is a difficult play, and one calling for the exercise of a good deal of the histrionic gift.

Lord Elstone, who took everything connected with the theatre very seriously, found his work cut out for him. Indeed

not once, but many times, he told himself that but for the intelligence, quiet help, and clever acting, of Lady Hilda Ardville, he would never have got this amateur performance of "A Pantomime Rehearsal" into anything like shipshape form.

Many and many a time, as he was directing his unruly troupe, he felt as if he were in very truth "Jack Deedes the gifted author," whose difficult task in the play consists in making all his "Aristocratic Amateurs" carry out his notion of how this new version of "The Babes in the Wood" should be acted! Lord Algy as "Sir Charles Grandison" and Lady Hilda as "The Honourable Lily Eaton-Belgrave" alone prevented "the whole show," as the young man sometimes vexedly said to himself, from being absurd in the wrong sense, and so an utter failure.

Often the producer and his leading lady held anxious counsel together.

"If only they could enter into the 'rotting' spirit which is, after all, the whole point of 'A Pantomime Rehearsal,'" he would say with something like a groan.

"I can't think why they don't buck up a bit more," she would answer sadly.

"It's because they're all so *stupid*," he would whisper crossly.

"It's so odd, too, for they all *say* they feel keen."

"They may *feel* keen, but they're hopelessly flabby; only you and your brother seem to me to have any pep at all!"

Lady Hilda swelled with pride on hearing this delightful praise. They caused her to work harder than ever, not only at her own part, but in a sense at that of everybody else.

Lord Elstone had made one excellent suggestion. This was that "A Pantomime Rehearsal" should be made into a period play, and be acted in the frills and furbelows of the early nineties. This pleased everybody, for everyone enjoys "dressing up."

But alas! As the days went on, and as each of the other ten actors and actresses became more and more tired, two or three of the young men who had thought Lady Hilda charming before they settled down to the really hard work of rehearsing a play, now began to think her a very disagreeable girl. And as for Lord Elstone, his earnestness—they called it his slave-driving qualities—induced in some members of his company something like hatred. Indeed, as the Duchess once observed to the Duke, the state of the younger members of their house-party was far too like that supposed to be displayed

in the play they were engaged in rehearsing, to be altogether pleasant.

But, as Rosie Brislington once muttered to the young man who played the part of "Captain Tom Robinson," even the most tiresome house-party comes to an end at last.

III.

AND now had come the evening when "A Pantomime Rehearsal" was going to be acted to a real paying audience. Already there had been two private performances that hadn't gone badly at all—the first shown to the older members of the house-party; the second, which was far greater fun, for the benefit of the servants, indoors and out. But then neither of these audiences could be regarded as impartial. Each of these audiences had been only too ready to be pleased with everything that took place, both on the stage and off.

To-night every member of the cast, as well as the producer himself, felt very nervous. Indeed, Lady Hilda was perpetually on the brink of tears, though she felt sure no one suspected the horrid fact.

The curtain was to go up at eight o'clock, and at twenty to eight Lord Elstone sought her out. They had both been so terribly busy all day that they had scarcely spoken to one another, a most unusual state of affairs.

"I want you to come along with me just for five minutes!" he exclaimed.

"What for?" she asked excitedly. "Do tell me? Is there anything I can do—anything I've forgotten?"

"You never forget anything——" He was looking at her with glowing eyes. "You're simply splendid! And you're so good that you'll act them all off the stage——"

"D'you really mean that?"

"Of course I do. If I were a manager——"

"Yes?" she cried, clasping her hands with an unconsciously dramatic gesture.

"You'd be my leading lady!"

She looked at him to see if he were serious, and when she saw that he was, she felt so pleased that two tears of joy actually ran down her painted cheeks.

"Do come with me just for five minutes?" and he touched her arm.

"Come where?"

"To the butler's pantry. It's the only place where we can get a minute's quiet."

"What a good idea!" she cried delightedly.

"You see, it's so near to the ballroom—I mean the theatre."

He pulled out his watch. "There's a good quarter of an hour before the curtain is even timed to go up, and it won't go up, as a matter of fact, for at least another twenty-five minutes."

In the centre of the stone-vaulted pantry, which had been, hundreds of years ago, a banqueting-room, stood a table, and on that table a tray on which were a plateful of daintily cut little sandwiches, a bottle of cold water, and half a bottle of champagne.

"Who can this tray be for? No one's ill that I know of," said Lady Hilda.

"Can't you guess whom it's for?"

She looked at the young man, surprised.

"Of course I can't guess."

"It's for you."

"For me?" The colour rushed into her face.

"I don't suppose you're aware," he said gravely, "that you've eaten nothing all day. I watched you at lunch, I watched you at tea, and I watched you while the others were all guzzling away an hour ago! So now you've got to eat up all those sandwiches, and you've got to have a little fizz—not much—with just a dash of water in it!"

He was now engaged in opening the half-bottle of champagne, and, as she said nothing, he went on, banteringly, "You see, I'm treating you as if you really were my leading lady! You don't mind—do you?"

"Of course I don't mind. I'll just do as you say."

She began to nibble daintily at a sandwich, and then she turned to him, piteously, "I don't think I *can* eat this. It seems to choke me. I'm not a bit hungry."

"Of course you can eat a sandwich—and I'll have one too, to keep you company! I know exactly how you feel, for I felt exactly like that on *my* first night."

He poured out a half-glass of champagne. The glass was of generous size, and had been made a hundred years ago, when Lady Hilda's great-grandfather and great-grandmother had married. Into the glass Lord Elstone poured a little water.

"Take a mouthful of this stuff! It's a 1906 champagne, the best bubbly in the world," he said, smiling.

She sipped a little champagne, and the colour came back into her pale cheeks. Then she looked round her, distractedly. "Oh, but you must have some too! I wonder where the glasses are kept?"

"I want you to drink all that up."

"Don't think about me."

She obeyed him, wondering a little within herself why she always did at once everything Lord Elstone told her to do.

"We mustn't be late," she said nervously.

"We shan't be late. You mustn't interfere with my job"—and he nearly added the words "my darling." But he pulled himself up in time, and for a moment felt what he was not given to feeling—ashamed of himself. For all his lack of conventionality Lord Elstone had old-fashioned ideas as to the way a man should treat a woman. It would have seemed to him dishonourable to lure his host's daughter into his host's pantry in order to make love to her.

After Lady Hilda had finished her champagne, it was his turn to be surprised. She poured a little water into the glass from which she had just drunk, and then she took out of the pocket of her long old-fashioned skirt, an unfolded handkerchief. Shaking it out, she dried the glass with it.

"I hope you won't think this 'piggy,'" she said, using an old nursery word, "but I do wish you'd have some of the champagne too!"

"'Drink to me only with thine eyes,'" he murmured; and she laughed merrily at the apt quotation. Then, to please her, he did pour out a little champagne, but he only sipped it.

"I suppose we must be going now," he said gloomily.

"Of course we must. I feel quite all right now!"

Yet before they went through the swing-door she suddenly stayed her dancing steps.

"Lord Elstone," she said earnestly, "I don't think any of us have thanked you half enough for all the trouble you've taken, and all the time you've spared us. Mother says she's afraid you must be fearfully tired."

He gave her a quick look. "The Duke kindly asked me just now to stay on for a few days after the others have gone——"

She cried childishly, "I *am* glad you're staying on. What fun we'll have talking it all over! There are heaps of things I want to ask you, too. I mean about acting, and about the plays they're having in London now. We're not coming up to town till May, and then there'll be that tiresome Season, for I'm coming out this year. I know you hate it all too, so I don't suppose we'll often meet, though I hope you'll find time to come and see us now and again when we're alone?"

"Of course I will," and then he said, rather awkwardly, "I've never been friends

with a girl before—I mean if I may call myself your friend."

"Of course we're friends, real friends!"

How proud and pleased she felt.

He held open the door for her to pass through, and when they were in the stone-paved passage she said eagerly, "Perhaps mother will let me go sometimes with you to the play, if you tell her it's a *nice* play. She's rather old-fashioned, you know, though she's very much more advanced than father. Heaps of my friends go about alone with young men, and I don't see why they shouldn't! However, even father agrees that it's all right if one's in a party, so *I* can make up a party, and *you* can come to it."

"Two's company, and four or six are none!" he exclaimed vexedly.

"That's true. But father would never understand *that*."

By now they were back in the ballroom, where already the packed audience looked impatient and expectant.

Lord Elstone glanced at his watch. "Another two minutes, and then we're off!"

The curtain went up; the lights were lowered, and the orchestra stopped. Then came the tingling sound of a piano, and Lord Algy, as "Jack Deedes," was discovered playing, with Sir Charles Grandison, on the top of the ladder painting in the "Forest Cloth."

As fortunately so often happens "on the night," everyone acted his and her best, the audience being particularly pleased with the result of Lord Elstone's having dressed the play in the now strange-looking clothes which were the only wear when "A Pantomime Rehearsal" first saw the limelight.

And when, at last, the curtain went down, never had there been more applause, more calls, on even a great London First Night—and the Duke, much as he hated what he called "all this kind of thing," felt frankly amused at the enthusiasm displayed.

After the final fall of the curtain an announcement was made inviting the audience to enjoy some light refreshments which the Duchess had generously provided, although refreshments had not been at all in the bond. And then the whole of the cast, together with their producer, trooped off to supper, some of them still humming the famous chorus:

"Diddle-oddle-oddle-chip-cham
Chi-chooral-li-ay:
Diddle-oddle-oddle-chip-cham
Chi-chooral-li-ay."

IV.

It was nearly a week later. Life had become normal again, and to one of the inmates of the Castle was about to appear what she called "flat," for Lord Elstone was leaving for town in a few minutes. Indeed, he and Lady Hilda were now saying just a few last words on the terrace.

"I do so hate your going away," she said in a melancholy tone.

"Is that really true?"

The young man for once spoke gravely, so gravely indeed that she looked up at him, surprised.

"Of course it's true. You're the one person in the world who understands *exactly* how I feel!"

"I should like to think that."

"You don't know how often I've wanted to be a man this last fortnight. In fact,"—she went off into a peal of laughter—"how often I've longed to be you, Lord Elstone!"

"To be *me*?"

"You can do everything you want. You can act or not act, just as you like. You've got money enough to build a theatre. Look at me? I'm only a girl—not even come out, though I shall be eighteen next month. But if I were forty, I still could never be an actress. It would make my father too unhappy."

He tried to smile, but he still looked unnaturally grave. How often had he rehearsed to himself, during the last few hours, what he was going to say! But somehow the opening he had planned now seemed affected, and silly. Still, he could think of nothing better.

"You've got the one thing I've always longed for, all my life. Can't you guess what that is?" he said earnestly.

The girl looked at him anxiously. She was completely at a loss.

And then she answered, in what he thought such a dear shy little way: "You mean a darling mother? I am lucky in *that*. I did feel sorry when I heard that you had lost yours when you were only a baby. Mothers always understand. I know that mother is very sorry for me; but she's too loyal to father to tell me so."

"I've come to love your mother," he said slowly. "But I didn't mean that."

"Then what did you mean?" She felt full of curiosity.

"If I tell you, you'll laugh at me—or if you are too kind to laugh now, you certainly

will laugh when you are alone, after I've gone."

"I should never think of laughing at you!" she exclaimed. And then, "You know what you said just before our performance? That you hoped we'd always be friends? Well, you really *are* my friend. I've never had a man friend before."

When she said that, looking straight at him, he all but took hold of her hand. But he was, as regarded some things, a very humble young man.

"You don't know what it's like to be as ugly as I am," he muttered. "To know that if an attractive woman speaks to you kindly, she——"

"She what?" asked Lady Hilda, staring at him in astonishment.

There had come a little chilly feeling round her heart. Somehow she didn't like the thought that "attractive women" talked to her friend.

"—is just being nice out of pity."

"D'you think looks matter as much as that in a man?" she asked, genuinely amazed that he should be troubling about his appearance.

"D'you remember what you told me about yourself when you were a little girl?"

Now Lady Hilda had talked to Lord Elstone so much in the last few days—"chitter chatter, chitter chatter," as the Duke had said crossly to himself more than once, when he had tried to get the young man to himself—that she really could not remember what it was that she had told him about herself as a little girl.

"I wonder what you mean?" she said nervously, for just now he looked so unlike his merry, lively self.

"You told me that you had loved the theatre ever since you had been to a pantomime called 'Beauty and the Beast.'"

She breathed again. They were on their old happy hunting ground of the theatre—that fairyland in which she longed to dwell.

"Yes!" she exclaimed. "That's quite true. I can remember it all, oh! so well even now——"

"There's one part in that pantomime that I've longed to play ever since I've met you—but then, of course, you'd have to be a member of the cast too."

She looked at him uncertainly. What could he mean?

And then he did take her hand. "The part I long to play," he said ardently, "is that of the poor Beast, if only you'll consent to be my Beauty——"

She opened her large eyes wide; thus, something of what he was feeling suddenly became clear to her. She tried, but only feebly, to withdraw her hand from his strong clasp.

"Dearest," he whispered. "My darling little love—don't say *No* just yet. This poor Beast would want so little from his Beauty. I don't mind how long I wait, if only I can see you now and again. Of course I know you'll have ever so many chances of marrying some better-looking chap——"

"I don't want a better-looking chap, and——"

Her voice was trembling and she still felt very much surprised. But in some ways she was like her mother; that is, she always knew her own mind; so bravely she went on. "—I like you just as you are. I should hate you to be different in anything. And as for chances——"

"Yes?"

He had drawn her to him; his ugly face full of hope, of deep feeling. But he was so afraid of frightening her!

She whispered "'There is,' I think, 'a tide in the affairs of Hilda——'" And then he did take her into his arms.

An hour later the Duke said to the Duch-

ess, "I see now why I could never get hold of that young chap——"

"You'll have plenty of time later on," she said placidly.

He looked at her surprised, even a little hurt.

"Laura? You *are* a cynic! People think you so soft and kind, but it's *I* who am the sentimentalist."

"She's such a baby; I do hate the thought of her being married yet——" She was crying now. "I do hope they won't be in too great a hurry."

"My poor darling, they're talking of Easter! It's your child who's in a hurry."

"James! How dare you say that?"

"It's the truth. Hilda is a sensible little girl, and she knows she's got hold of a good thing. I wish her sisters had been more like her——"

And then, all at once, the Duchess began to laugh. "I'm thinking of Agnes Brislington," she gasped.

"Why should you think of that horrid woman just now?"

"Something she once said came back to my mind. After all, she's one of my oldest friends; I'll write to-day and tell her our news. It would hurt her if she first saw it in the paper!"



CHESTNUT SUNDAY.

YEAR after year the chestnut
 Lights summer's flame anew,
 For folk who take their fancy
 At Bushey and at Kew.

In the green, happy places
 The people come and go;
 Over their heads in thousands
 The chestnut's candles glow.

In red and white the chestnut
 Illumes her bough, and brings
 To life again the laughter
 Of long-forgotten springs.

FREDA C. BOND.

THE WATCH BY THE WELL

By RALPH DURAND

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

AT an age when many men are still at a University Peter Darrell, who had been ignominiously ploughed in the most elementary examination that the Universities set, was practically an absolute monarch. It was true that in governing a powerful and war-loving African tribe he was responsible to the Commissioner of British Megobaniland, who was responsible to a Secretary of State, who was responsible to the House of Commons, which derived its authority from a composite entity known as the Man in the Street. But as the Commissioner of Megobaniland believed in giving his subordinates a free hand, and as Megobaniland was only one out of the many remote parts of the British Empire with which the Secretary of State was concerned, and as the House of Commons was less interested in its servant, the Secretary of State, than in its Master, the Man in the Street, and as the Man in the Street had only a very vague idea as to what was being done in Megobaniland and had never heard of either Peter Darrell or the Wanazoa tribe over which he ruled, Darrell was left free to carry out the Commissioner's advice, "use your own common sense and make your own laws as you go along." The laws that he made were neither discussed in the Press nor disparaged by an official opposition; they were introduced with the simple words, "Listen, Chiefs and Headmen of the Wanazoa! this is my order"; and some of them—such as his decree that no man might pay less than three cows for a wife—would have shocked the Man in the Street.

Darrell felt very important indeed when the chiefs and headmen of the Wanazoa assembled to hear his decrees. Not even the paramount chief, Matipa, entered his presence without scraping his feet and clapping his hands, and the whole assembly clapped

their hands whenever he paused in his speech. They clapped their hands even if he sneezed; snapped their fingers to avert the danger of his swallowing an evil spirit if he happened to yawn; and when they addressed him, used terms, meant to be highly complimentary, such as "Grandfather," "Fat One," "Hippopotamus" and "Earth-shaking Elephant."

But not even autocrats can do everything they wish to do. Darrell spent all his spare time superintending the building of as stately a house as could be built with native labour and local materials, and in planting a garden to delight the eye of the girl he loved. But he could not marry without the Commissioner's permission, and Sir Humphrey Stark had said that he would not give this until he felt satisfied that the Wanazoa were sufficiently tamed. They had very tamely accepted Darrell's authority as a representative of the Great White King: but that had been only a few months before. Sir Humphrey feared that they would not be so tame when the bonds of discipline began to be irksome, and he insisted that Darrell must not bring a wife into the country until all danger of a rebellion was past. Besides the Wanazoa, Darrell was responsible for the well-being and good behaviour of the Akapolo, a tribe that, a generation before, the Wanazoa had driven into the mountains, whom he had not yet seen. As soon as the thatching of his house was well under way he had his camp gear packed and set out to announce to the Akapolo that they were now subjects of His Britannic Majesty. A two days' march brought him to the Akapolo country—but not to the Akapolo people. Throughout a long day's search in valleys that lay between massive tors of naked limestone he saw herds of cattle grazing, but the herd-boys hid among the rocks at his approach; he passed through fields of standing corn and

heard the rush of feet, but could get no answer when he shouted a question as to the whereabouts of the kraals. Though he heard cocks crowing, dogs barking, and even babies crying, he could nowhere find any human habitation. He was baffled even when he set his escort of King's African Riflemen to find and follow footprints in the dust, for the footprints always led to naked rock where not even a Bushman could have followed them.

Darrell had his tent pitched for the night, and as he smoked his last pipe a voice rang out of the darkness threatening that if the strangers did not go away at once Faku, chief of the Akapolo, would swoop down on them with all his warriors and eat them up. At dawn Darrell climbed to the summit of the nearest tor. When the sun rose, its light at first showed nothing but barren hillside, but as it strengthened he saw that what at first he had taken to be lichen-covered boulders were thatched huts so cunningly placed that they were invisible from the valley. Then cattle began to stream, lowing and jostling, out of the mouths of caves, and a party of women, water-pot on head, filed down a rift in the hillside.

Darrell marked where the rift reached level ground, descended to the valley, and waited till the women returned, but at sight of him they dropped their water-pots and scattered among the crannies of the tor. He shrugged his shoulders and ascended the rift until it closed to a mere crack in the rock. On either side the rock was sheer and too smooth to afford hand- or foot-hold, but a tree-trunk, notched to serve as a ladder, was propped against it. He was about to climb this when a shower of stones fell all round him, and at the same moment unseen hands drew the tree-trunk out of his reach. Darrell returned to his tent, told Chiteema, his servant, to hurry up with his breakfast, and gave the Riflemen their orders.

"Scour the valleys," he said, "and don't come back to the camp till you have caught one of these baboon people."

In the days before Sir Humphrey Stark had annexed Megobaniland to the British Empire the sergeant of the Riflemen had been a successful slave-raider and had prided himself on capturing his slaves in an undamaged condition. He searched till he found fresh footprints leading towards a corn-field, laid an ambush, waited patiently all day, and at sunset returned to the camp leading a strapping young woman, who showed little sign of agitation beyond a

tendency to giggle—whatever terror she had at the prospect of being carried off and married by force to her captor being overcome by natural vanity because he had elected to chase her instead of one of her companions.

"I have sent for you," said Darrell, "because I wish you to tell Faku to come and talk with me. Give him this as a token that I come in peace."

"Wau!" exclaimed the girl, as Darrell put into her hands a blanket coloured like a pavement artist's idea of a tropical sunset.

"And this."

The girl's eyes fairly goggled with delight as she stretched out her hands to receive a block of salt. She tucked it between her skin and her apron of bark-cloth and then, with much ecstatic smacking of the lips, licked up the grains that had stuck to her fingers.

"And take this for yourself," said Darrell, holding out a string of beads.

"Zhee!" exclaimed the girl. She stretched out her hands and then withdrew them. She looked suspiciously from one man to another as if fearing that such splendid generosity must be a cloak to some unguessed form of treachery. Then with one agile movement she sprang to her feet, snatched at the beads and darted away into the gathering darkness.

In the days when Darrell had been a trader he had learned that African tribes that cannot find salt in their own country will buy it more eagerly than anything else. While he was shaving next morning, a crowd gathered on the hillside near his camp and shouted a proposal that if the strangers would place as much salt as a man can carry in some conspicuous position and retire beyond spear-throwing range they would drive three of their best cattle towards the camp. The Rifleman sergeant shouted a reply that his master would give the salt to Faku if he came for it in person. Then three old men timidly came into the camp, bringing presents: a dishful of sour curd, a basketful of dried locusts and a dozen roast mice spitted on skewers. Darrell tasted the curd and found it so good that he ate it all for his breakfast. The one locust that he ate reminded him of the flavour of shrimps, but he found it too prickly to be enjoyable. The roast mice he passed on to the Riflemen. They protested that, except among people like the Akapolo, only children eat mice—but they accepted them, grinning broadly and chaffing each other as they ate.

Darrell gave each of the old men a spoon-

ful of salt, which they eagerly licked from the palms of their hands, a few used cartridge cases and some imitation pearl shirt buttons. They then said that Faku was too ill to visit the white man but that they themselves would take him the promised salt. Darrell replied that he hoped Faku would recover before sunset as otherwise he would return whence he had come, taking with him the presents he had brought. This inform-

was made, they actually went inside it and with apelike curiosity tumbled his bedding and his personal belongings.

Faku, accompanied by some of his headmen, arrived at midday. Draped round his shoulders was his new blanket, the beauty of which was already enhanced by thick stripes of red ochre mixed with oil. He offered two cows as a present and received in return the promised salt, a hundred yards



"'Bwana,' said the sergeant earnestly. 'This is not the time of harvest. It is not the corn-dance they are dancing in that village. Those drums are war-drums, bwana.' 'Rot!' said Darrell peevishly. 'These people are never properly happy except when they are making a noise. I have said there is to be no more war.'"

ation was shouted to the crowd on the hillside, was passed on to men on the hilltop, and within an hour a hidden scout shouted that Faku was coming.

Meanwhile the crowd on the hillside plucked up courage. In ones and twos men, women and children sidled into the camp to stare at the white man. Darrell gave orders that nothing must be said or done to frighten people whose acquaintance it was so difficult to make, but the sergeant snorted with indignation when, after fingering the tent and asking of what animal's hide it

of blue cotton cloth, twenty pounds weight of copper wire, a dozen clasp-knives and an open tin of plum-jam, which he shared on the spot with his Privy Council.

Faku then took from behind his ear what was left of a home-made cigar, somewhat thicker than his thumb, which when new must have been nine inches long. He put the ragged end into his mouth, applied a fire-brand to the other, sucked vigorously till

he had got it into full working order and handed it to Darrell. Darrell mastered his British fastidiousness to the extent of taking one mouthful of smoke that reminded him of the days when he and his small brothers in the privacy of his father's attic had smoked brown paper in the gardener's clay pipe, then passed on the cigar to Faku's chief headman.

He then made a speech. He said that the Great White King, whose servant he was, had taken the Akapolo under the protection of his shield and had given orders that the Wanazoa must cease raiding them. Faku and his headman nodded, grunted, scratched their ribs and said that the news was good. Darrell continued that he had brothers, men of the same colour as himself, rich in such things as blue cloth, beads, knives, and especially salt, who would sell these things in exchange for Akapolo cattle. Faku grunted again that the news was good. Finally Darrell said that, in return for the protection of the Great White King, Faku and his people must obey whatever orders he, the Great White King's servant, gave. Faku replied that Darrell was a hen under whose wings he and his people would nestle. The levee then terminated. Soon after the Akapolo had departed Darrell was informed that they had taken with them a tin of mustard, a spoon, a tin-opener, his shaving mirror and his toothbrush. Darrell regretted the theft, not so much as evidence of the depravity of his new subjects as because the toothbrush was his last; a substitute could not be purchased nearer than Brazenbridge's Stores at Kilibula, and *The Lady of the Lake*, the steam launch that kept him in touch with the Administration there, visited his end of Lake Madzikulu not more often than once a month.

The launch that carried Darrell's order for a dozen new toothbrushes carried also a letter to the girl who was waiting for him in sleepy Ilchester.

"Everything is going magnificently, Winnie darling," he wrote. "The Akapolo are tremendously bucked at the idea that they are now British subjects, and in spite of the Commissioner's fears the Wanazoa don't show the least sign of kicking. Of course, the way to keep both tribes out of mischief is to get them to do some honest work. Brazenbridge has promised to establish a store near my *boma* and has given me a ton of cotton-seed. I distributed it among the Wanazoa headmen, told them what it was for, and promised them that when they had

cotton to sell another white man would give them beads and blankets and every European luxury they had ever seen in exchange for it. They said it was a topping idea and took all the seed I would give them. I must admit that up till now they have gone no farther than setting their womenfolk to work at cotton-growing, but I hope that when the store is established greed to possess the treasures it contains may overcome the men's rooted objection to manual labour. The Akapolo's country is not suitable for cotton-growing, so I shall get them to go in for cattle-breeding on a big scale. It should not be difficult now that they are safe from the Wanazoa raids, and perhaps I shall be able to get Brazenbridge to send me a few good Shorthorns to improve the local breed. When the store is here and every man hard at work, for the first time in tribal history, earning an honest living, Sir Humphrey Stark will surely have to acknowledge that the country is a fit place for a white woman. Then, my darling, my dearest——"

There followed a page of rhapsody, after writing which Darrell became practical once more.

"I am working hard at making your garden. Potatoes do well in this climate, so do tomatoes, and I find I can grow lettuce and radishes if I shade them from the noon-day sun, but none of the flower seeds you sent me have come up except the nasturtiums. They are spreading like weeds. I think of you every time I look at them. Oh, Winnie dear, waiting is very hard, but I don't think we shall have to wait much longer."

* * * * *

If sometimes Darrell was tempted to believe that he had a natural genius for administration it was due to the hearty applause which the chiefs and headmen of the Wanazoa always accorded his decrees and wise maxims. It was always his custom, before dismissing an assembly that he had summoned, to deliver a short homily on such subjects as the dignity of labour, the wisdom of settling disputes by arbitration instead of by force, and especially the folly of war. Many of his pithiest sayings were derived from the copy-books over which, literally with his tongue in his cheek, he had laboured in his early childhood; but the Wanazoa chiefs, who had no means of knowing that they were not sparkling emanations of his own brain, always seemed to hail them as startlingly new and astonishingly true apothegms and actually did hail

them with hand-clapping and shouts of approval. It was a great shock to his vanity to discover, soon after he had written to Winifred Neville that everything was going magnificently, that this apparently enthusiastic assent of the Wanazoa chiefs had been mere formal politeness of the hollowest kind.

One morning a deputation of principal chiefs came to the *bualo* and said that a number of youths of the tribe had applied for recognition as warriors and would like Darrell to review them before they set out.

"Before they set out where?" asked Darrell.

"To raid the Akapolo," answered the spokesman.

"I have said that there must be no lifting of the spear without my order," said Darrell indignantly.

"It is for that reason that we have come to you," continued the spokesman. "The young men are eager to wash their spears in blood so that they may wear warriors' plumes. All is ready. They have gorged much meat to make them strong. The witch-doctors have sprinkled them with medicine to make them brave. They wait only for you to send them forth."

"There is to be no raiding of the Akapolo," said Darrell firmly. "They are under the shield of the Great White King. I have spoken. You may go."

"The women will laugh at the youths if they cannot prove their valour," objected the spokesman.

"Does it need much valour to chase a chicken-hearted Kapolo among the rocks and stab him in the back?" asked Darrell contemptuously. "Are there no lions in the country on which a youth may prove his manhood? Let them slay lions and wear their claws as a necklace—then will the women know that they are brave."

"That is not our custom," said the spokesman. "There is also another matter. The youths wish to marry, but a wife cannot be hewn out of the rocks. A wife must be bought with cattle. How can our youths get cattle with which to buy wives if they may not raid the Akapolo?"

"They can work. Let a youth who wishes to buy a wife ask his headman to assign him a piece of land. Let him clear the ground and hoe it. When it is hoed I will give him cotton-seed to sow. When his cotton harvest is ready a white man will come and buy it, giving cloth and beads, axe-heads and knives, brass-wire and blankets. When he has earned enough brass-

wire and cloth let him buy cattle with them, and with the cattle he can buy a wife."

"Hoeing is women's work," protested the spokesman.

"I have said that there shall be no raiding of the Akapolo," said Darrell, rising from his chair. "I have spoken. Go."

A weaker man than Darrell would have found it as difficult to persuade the young Wanazoa to hoe as a London parish worker would find it to get book-makers to attend a Mothers' Meeting or a Sewing Guild. But the young men actually did begin to prepare ground and Darrell, more pleased with himself than ever, sent for more cotton-seed.

But no more seed was applied for. Before the plantations were ready for it a subtle change had come over the tribe. The number of litigants who came to Darrell's *bualo* to have their disputes settled fell off. Chiefs whom he summoned sent messages that they were ill. When he entered a village he found none but old women to greet him. Men whom he encountered by the wayside scuttled off into the long grass instead of standing to salute him. Sullen listlessness came over the tribe. The only members of it who seemed to be doing any work at all were those whom Darrell had sentenced for some offence to make roads under the supervision of his Riflemen.

One evening, when Darrell was sitting on the verandah of his newly-finished house, wondering dejectedly how much longer it would be before Winnie would sit there with him, the Sergeant of the Riflemen approached and saluted him.

"Listen, *bwana*," he said. "Do you hear nothing?"

"I hear a lot of drumming in that village on the hillside," said Darrell moodily.

"Nothing else."

"*Bwana*," said the sergeant earnestly. "This is not the time of harvest. It is not the corn-dance they are dancing in that village. Those drums are war-drums, *bwana*."

"Rot!" said Darrell peevishly. "These people are never properly happy except when they are making a noise. I have said there is to be no more war."

A few days later *The Lady of the Lake* arrived from Kilibula, towing barges loaded with the trade-goods that Brazenbridge had promised to send in time for the cotton harvest and carrying Brazenbridge himself.

"Well, how goes it?" asked Brazenbridge. "Have your people got much cotton for me?"

"I don't believe there's a ton of it among the whole lot of them," said Darrell bitterly. "At first they took all the seed I would give them and a lot of plantations were started, but lately they seem to have lost interest in them. What cotton has come up is pretty well choked with weeds. I don't know what has come over them. Even my *bandazi*, Chiteema, flatly disobeyed me this morning."

"Is that the fellow you told me of who regards himself as your slave?"

"That's the fellow. Considering that I saved his life at a pretty heavy cost to myself, I should have thought that he at least would be loyal to me."

"How did he disobey you?"

"It was a silly, trivial little thing—but it annoyed me. When I was leaving the *boma* this morning I saw something lying on the path near the gate, a thing that looked as if it might have been made for a child's toy. I didn't know that the Wanazoa made toys for their kids, so I was just going to pick it up and look at it more closely when Chiteema raced up, shoved me aside, picked the thing up and went off with it. I told him to bring it to me, but instead of doing so he shoved it into the kitchen fire. The thing was made of straw, so of course it blazed up at once."

"Was it by any chance a sort of representation of a pig?"

"It might have been. It wasn't particularly like a pig. But it was as like a pig as anything else, I suppose—or else a hippopotamus."

"It was meant for a pig," said Brazenbridge. "Good man, Chiteema. He thinks he saved your life."

"How?"

"That pig was put there for you to tread on, or kick aside or touch in some way. The man that put it there had first doctored it with black-magic medicine and chanted incantations over it in the belief that if you touched it you would after a while swell up and burst. Where's Chiteema?"

"I don't know. I gave the poor chap the rough side of my tongue, and as I haven't seen him since I suppose he has gone away to sulk somewhere."

"He's in his hut probably—already half dead with terror. As he was the one that touched the straw pig he will naturally think that he is the one that is going to swell up and burst. You're taking it pretty coolly considering that he offered his life to save yours."

Darrell was feeling too much worried

about the state of his district in general to care as much as he should about Chiteema's state of mind.

"Of course I'm grateful to the silly chump and all that. I'll tell him so when I see him. But he'll be all right as soon as he finds out that he isn't going to swell up and burst."

"No, he won't. When you have been among the natives as long as I have you will know that their imaginations are so lively that if they think themselves bewitched, for all practical purposes they really are bewitched. That's what gives witch-doctors such a pull. A man is accused of some offence or other and swears he is innocent. He is put to the trial by ordeal. The witch-doctor makes him swallow a concoction of *mwabvi*. If he really is innocent, his conviction that the *mwabvi* can't hurt him gives him strength to resist the poison. If his system is weakened by the effects of a guilty conscience the poison kills him. Since Chiteema thinks that straw pig has power to kill him, the odds are that it will kill him. Let's go and look for him and do something for him."

They found Chiteema lying on his sleeping-mat in the hut that served for a kitchen. His eyes were bloodshot, his face had turned from chocolate colour to a dark grey, his lips were the colour of wood-ash. He was writhing feebly, as if he could already feel the pain that he expected, and he was moaning feebly: "*Ohe, Mama! Ohe, Mama!*"

"We've come none too soon," said Brazenbridge, taking a tin of mustard from a shelf. "Say something to buck him up while I mix him an emetic."

"You risked your life for me, Chiteema," said Darrell, bending over the groaning man.

"My life is yours," said Chiteema faintly. "Am I not your slave?"

"You shall not die," said Brazenbridge, handing Darrell a drink compounded of mustard, salt and water. "White man's magic is stronger than black man's magic."

Darrell supported his *bandazi's* woolly head and held the nauseous mixture to his lips. Chiteema sipped, gulped, and drank the rest at one draught. Then he rose unsteadily to his feet and languidly picked up a dish-cloth as if to resume his interrupted duties.

"See the effect of imagination," said Brazenbridge. "He's feeling stronger already. That's because you told him he would not die. When the emetic takes hold the cure will be complete. Its effect will seem to him absolutely logical proof that he

is throwing the magic out of his system. In an hour he will be as right as rain." He led the way back to Darrell's own quarters. "And now what do you propose to do about the attempt to kill you?"

"Nothing," said Darrell. "It's no use hoping to find out who did it and to try would merely flatter the man's vanity."

"But from what you tell me I've got the idea that the desire to get rid of you is fairly general. Have they been dancing war-dances or any foolishness of that sort?"

"My sergeant says they have been beating war-drums."

"And are you going to sit still and do nothing till the whole country is ablaze? Why not send for troops? I'm here all handy with the launch. I can get to Kilibula in five days. There's a Machine-Gun Company of Sikhs there and a detachment of King's African Rifles. The return journey would be slower because *The Lady of the Lake* would have barges to tow, but she could be back here in a fortnight with enough troops to give you the upper hand."

"But wouldn't that precipitate a rising? If they saw that I was getting ready to fight won't they hurry up to get in the first blow?"

"But you know—you can take my word for it—that they are getting ready to fight. Isn't it up to you to get in the first blow?"

"I'd rather not do what can't be undone—until I'm obliged," said Darrell. "If they rebel, all the work that I've done here will be undone."

"Nothing of the kind. A rising is bound to come sooner or later. No really full-blooded African warrior tribe has ever yet knuckled under to us without being forced to realise that we were top dog. The Basuto, the Amazulu, the Matabele—they all had their turn."

"I should hate them to rise. I've got a notion that whenever there has been a native rising in Africa a full half of the blame of it rested on the white man. Besides, I like my people."

Brazenbridge shrugged his shoulders.

"A tough crowd like the Wanazoa are bound to rise sooner or later. It's next door to inevitable. The sooner they do it and get it over and learn that we are their masters the better for us and the better for them. It's a necessary step in the job of civilising them. In the first place, when they have had their beating you will have a decent excuse for disarming them. In the second, you can't expect anyone to risk any capital in developing the country until they

have had their beating. Look here! I said I would establish a store here. And I will. But I always meant to build it close to the lake so that the man in charge of it would have a decent chance to light out in the event of trouble. But when the Wanazoa have had their lesson I'll establish a dozen stores in the country, I'll establish coffee and tobacco plantations, I'll bring white men into the country. But I'm not going to do that until the Wanazoa have had their fling and been properly tamed. You'd better let me hurry back to Kilibula with a letter to the Commissioner asking for troops."

"I must think," said Darrell. "If you don't mind my leaving you I'll take a walk along the lake shore. Ask Chiteema for anything you want."

The next hour was the most crucial hour of Darrell's life. Ever since he had taken over the administration of the country he had determined that, with God's help, he would so rule the Wanazoa that they would never be goaded to rise against him. Now Brazenbridge had told him that such a hope was vain—and Brazenbridge had had infinitely more experience than he of Africa and the Africans. Moreover, he fully saw the force of his arguments. But what tested him most sorely was the temptation that Brazenbridge had unconsciously put into his mind. The Commissioner of Megobani-land had promised that he might send for Winnie to come and marry him as soon as the Wanazoa were satisfactorily tamed. If he took Brazenbridge's advice, if he precipitated a rising by sending for troops, he could tame them with machine guns. It was not the way he had hoped to tame them, but it would bring his chance of marrying Winnie within measurable distance. He could have his happiness with Winnie without any sacrifice—the Wanazoa would pay for it—except the sacrifice of an apparently impractical ideal—and perhaps—though no one would know it except himself—the sacrifice of his honour.

He went back to Brazenbridge.

"I have made up my mind," he said. "I won't ask for troops. If I do, the Wanazoa will rise, and I don't know how many lives it will cost. If I don't send for troops and still they rebel, only one life—mine—will be lost."

"That's where you make a mistake," said Brazenbridge. "If the Wanazoa kill you, the Commissioner will have to send a punitive expedition—and it will have a tougher job than if you had made the first

move because the Wanazoa will be expecting it. There's another thing, too, for you to consider; native risings have a way of being

burn his kraal to the ground. I have spoken. Go."

Punctuality is not an African virtue, but it was well before the appointed time when a dozen lusty, sweating hammock-bearers deposited their twenty-stone-weight chief at the entrance to Darrell's *bomd*.

Matipa alighted, waddled to the *bwalo* and squatted down. Seething with impatience



"To their consternation they saw the man they supposed to be dead sitting by it unhurt. Because thirst impelled them forward and fear urged them to run, they neither advanced nor retreated, but stood still."

infectious: if the Wanazoa rise and have even so small a success as wiping out you and your little escort of Riflemen would be, a score of other tribes may think their chance has come. The rebellion may spread throughout Megobaniland."

"I hadn't thought of that," said Darrell slowly. "I had hoped to win the Wanazoa, not to conquer them. I suppose it can't be done. I'll ask for troops."

* * * * *

Darrell paced the lake shore till *The Lady of the Lake* was a speck on the glistening sheet of water. Then an idea occurred to him. He hurried back to the *boma* and called the sergeant.

"Go to Matipa. Tell him to be here to-morrow before the hour when the cattle lie down to chew the cud. Stay at his kraal till he starts, and come with him. If he pretends he is sick, say that he must have himself carried. If he refuses to come, say that I will come before sundown to-morrow and

though he was to get the interview over, Darrell kept him waiting for an hour or more before he himself went to the *bwalo*. When at last he did take his seat, he cut short all the formal introductory remarks that are usual in holding diplomatic conversations with African potentates. He ordered everyone else out of earshot and then turned fiercely to the chief.

"Some dog has tried to kill me," he said.

Matipa did his best to produce an exclamation of horrified astonishment, but it was not convincing.

"You are our grandfather, *mfumu*," he

said. "Why should any of your children wish to kill you?"

"That is what I have sent for you to tell me."

"How can I tell what is in the mind of evil men?" protested Matipa.

"If you do not know what grievance the Wanazoa have against me you are not fit to be their chief, and I must put someone with clearer eyes in your place."

"I will send for my most cunning diviners and——"

"You will stay here till you have told me the truth."

Darrell picked up his pen and made a pretence of being very busy—but he wrote nothing but his signature, scrawled with a shaking hand on every spare inch of his paper. At the end of an hour he lifted his head.

"Speak," he said sternly.

"*Mfumu*," said Matipa. "Our hearts are sore because those jackals of Akapolo, made brave by the shadow of your shield, snap at our heels. They raid our cattle,



"'I will not harm you,' shouted Darrell. 'All may draw water without fear. See! I will go and sit in full view on that rock over there till you have gone.'"

coming not as warriors shouting defiance as was our custom when we used to raid them, but as thieves stealthily in the night, taking a cow from one kraal and an ox from another while we sleep."

"Since when has this happened?" demanded Darrell.

"It is now two moons since their first raid," said Matipa. "Therefore our young men are angry. They say, '*Zhee*. Let us go and show these jackals of Akapolo how raiding should be done.' I say to them, 'The Servant of the Great White King forbids.' They say, 'What is he to us? Let us kill him and be free once more.' They respect me no more now that you have taken from me the power to kill."

"That is why my sleep has been disturbed by the beating of war-drums?" said Darrell. "Warn the young men that I have a torch to set fire to their huts if they do not behave. As for the Akapolo—if I find that you have spoken the truth I will deal with them. Tell me—from how many wells do the women of Faku's kraal draw water at this season of the year?"

"There has been no rain for several moons. He has but one well at this season."

"Send me a man to guide me to that well. Let him be here by cock-crow to-morrow. I have spoken. You may go."

* * * * *

Two days later Faku's wives, coming down at sunrise to fill their water-pots, found Darrell's tent pitched beside their only well. He shouted to them that he came in peace, but they dropped their pots and scattered up the hillside, and Darrell saw no one else either that day or the next.

By now nothing remained of the temptation to take the easy path that Brazen-bridge had suggested—except shame that for one weak half-hour he had almost welcomed the advice to tame the Wanazoa with machine guns. Dearly as he loved Winnie, eagerly as he longed for the time to come when she would share his life, he did not want happiness with her at that price. In those two long days of watching by the well, though he was in danger all the while that some Akapolo might summon courage to sneak up and stab him from behind, he had leisure to realise all that his work meant to him. The Wanazoa were his people. He knew the African at his worst, his ignorance, his filthy habits, his proneness to lie and steal, his inherent cruelty; yet the sacrifice that Chiteema, his sullen slovenly, muddle-headed *bandazi*, had been prepared to make

for him, suggested that the Africans' failings might perhaps be balanced by fine qualities of which he as yet knew little. With his arms claspng his knees and his eyes on the hilltops Darrell prayed silently for help to rule his people not by force but by wisdom.

He had sent away his escort of Riflemen as soon as his tent was pitched. He had even sent away Chiteema. He wanted no one about him to increase the Akapolo's fear of approaching him, and it was of the utmost importance that he should have speech with them. If he could not persuade them without using force to cease lifting the Wanazoas' cattle, he must use force: and against such natural strongholds as theirs his own small escort of Riflemen would be useless; it would be necessary after all to employ the troops he had asked for.

Throughout each of the two days Darrell sat in the door of his tent, but at night he lay out on the top of a boulder fifty yards away from it. It was well that he took this precaution. Soon after moonset on the second night he heard all around him the rustle of grass, the soft tread of naked feet, the whispering of orders. Then followed a shout and a rush, and the dim loom of the tent was hidden by indistinctly seen forms of the men that surrounded it, stabbing their spears through and through the canvas.

On the following morning—Faku's people had now been two days without water—a long string of women filed down to the well. To their consternation they saw the man they supposed to be dead sitting by it unhurt. Because thirst impelled them forward and fear urged them to run, they neither advanced nor retreated, but stood still and gaped.

"I will not harm you," shouted Darrell. "All may draw water without fear. See! I will go and sit in full view on that rock over there till you have gone. When you go back to the kraal tell Faku that I do not leave this place till I have spoken with him."

The women filled their water-pots and returned, and came again and went backwards and forwards all day carrying water to their thirsty men-folk, but Darrell could get no answer to the question he shouted as to whether his message had been carried to Faku. That evening after darkness had fallen a messenger from the chief, shouted from some near-by hiding-place, that if Darrell did not go away Faku would make his skull a nest for field-mice.

"The buffalo fights with its horns; the monkey with its chatter," Darrell shouted

in reply. "Every beast roars in its own den. Tell Faku that the stone that rolled downhill thought itself very strong because the buck scattered in front of it, but it broke in pieces at the bottom."

"*Mfumu*," said the unseen messenger. "What is it you wish to say to Faku?"

"That shall Faku hear when he comes to me. Now, do not stay there barking like a baboon on a rock, but go. I wish to sleep."

Darrell was too cautious to sleep, but the night passed uneventfully, and when his wives came down to the well next day Faku came with them, taking cover as he came behind the stoutest of them.

Darrell waited till he had come as near as he dared.

"There is nothing to fear, Faku," he said. "See, I am unarmed, Come closer. Sit on that stone there so that I need not raise my voice. You may bring your spears. I am not afraid of them."

Faku looked at the stone with the eye of one skilled in the art of running away. He saw that there was a good line of retreat behind it and that a steep-sided gully separated it from where Darrell was sitting. He approached it timidly, scraped his feet in the dust, clapped his hands and sat down.

"I do not wish to hear any lies," said Darrell. "Why did you let your people steal the cattle of the Wanazoa?"

"*Mfumu*," said Faku. "We believed that you had bewitched the Wanazoa so that they would no longer fight."

"They did not fight because I held the shield of the Great White King above your heads. Beware lest I take it away and leave you at their mercy. Listen. In days

gone by the Wanazoa raided your cattle, and now you have lifted theirs. That is past. We will not thrash that straw again. There must be no more raiding. If the Wanazoa lift your cattle again they shall feel the weight of my anger. If you lift the Wanazoa cattle I will come with armed men and smoke you out of your caves and burn your huts. Do you understand?"

"*Baba*, grandfather, I understand," said Faku humbly.

"Listen again. It is the will of the Great White King that his people should live at peace with each other. It is my order that you and twelve of your chiefs come to my *boma* to talk peace with Matipa and twelve of his chiefs. My shield shall be above your head going and returning. If between you you cannot find a path leading towards peace, the hailstones of my anger shall fall on both of you alike. Now tell one of those women to carry your order that twelve of your chiefs are to follow us to my *bwalo*."

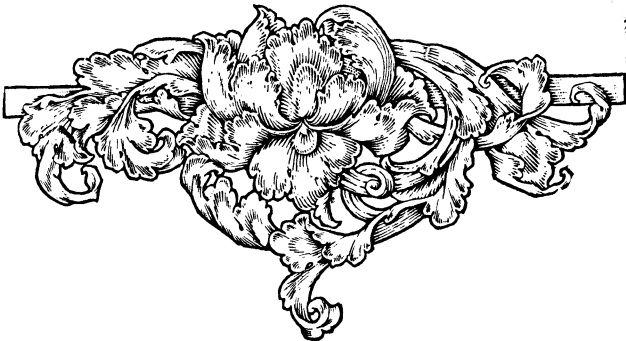
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In less than a fortnight after her departure *The Lady of the Lake* steamed into the harbour below Darrell's *boma*, towing two barges, the one carrying two teams of Sikh machine-gunners and provisions for a two-months' campaign, the other carrying half a company of King's African Riflemen. An Indian-army subaltern jumped ashore.

"Ten thousand blessings on your head, Darrell," he said. "My men are sick of perpetual drill, and I was beginning to be afraid that I should never see active service at all."

"Sorry to disappoint you," said Darrell, "but you aren't going to see it now."

A further episode in the career of Peter Darrell will appear in the next number.





SONG ELUSIVE.

THERE'S a song for ever sounding
At the portals of my ears,
And few there are who know of it,
And scarce a one that hears,
For the sorrow and the joy of it
Lie deep below our tears.

You can hear it through the singing
Of the songs of mortal men,
Just beyond the reach of them,
Just above their ken,
Silver-clear and slender
As the piping of a wren.

Sometimes in the dawning,
When the grey cloud-mists part,
Sometimes at the gloaming
The little song will start,
Ringing, ringing, ringing
Down the cloisters of my heart.

Its beauty holds the hidden soul
Of all the songs that rise
From the dreaming of true poets
Under a thousand skies ;
But never a one will sing that song
This side of Paradise !

DOROTHY FRANCES GURNEY.

THIS YEAR'S CRICKET AND THE FUTURE

REPRESENTATIVE MATCHES AS A PRELIMINARY TRY-OUT FOR FUTURE TESTS

◉ By JACK HOBBS ◉

SURREY COUNTY CRICKET CLUB AND ENGLAND

I WAS considerably puzzled towards the end of last cricket season and afterwards by the attitude of our public critics of cricket. There were loud complaints because more was not done in the way of trying out our young players in test matches, so that we should be the more fitted to meet Australia on her own ground in the next test series that have been arranged to follow our 1928 season.

Now I think I should be the last person to be accused of lack of sympathy with the aspirations of young cricketers. In and out of seasons I have advocated their claims to be given every possible chance to show their powers, and encouragement to develop the same. But I would just as emphatically point out that test matches themselves cannot be used as trial matches. Before last season's test matches opened we tried out all the available English talent. Our choices for the test matches were made on the results of those trials. If more young cricketers were not included in the test teams the inference is obvious: they were not considered good enough—then, at any rate.

Our business last season from June onwards was not to try players in the tests but *to win the tests*, and the English selectors in the exercise of what wisdom they possessed picked what they considered the best teams to beat Australia. In the result England won the rubber, and it may reasonably be claimed that the end justified the means.

True, we won only one test match, but it was one more than Australia, the only one decided. But I think we may fairly claim in addition that in most of the other trials of strength with the Australians, leaving out the fiasco at Nottingham, England had the better of what play there was.

Some people are always wanting to "scrap" the old players, and a cricketer in their opinion comes under the category of "old" after he has played in one series of tests. Now age has precious little to do with it. The best men for the job should be England's motto, and age should be considered only in its relation to fitness and waning powers. So long as these are beyond suspicion then—the most talented cricketers. In my experience the last thing the veteran desires is to lag superfluous on the cricket stage.

England's young players were well and truly tried before last season's tests began, and even in the tests we found places for those who had come favourably through the ordeals. But I have a recollection that the inclusion of that young cricketer G. T. S. Stevens of Middlesex (he played in the last two tests) aroused some public misgiving. Indeed, criticism of the selectors' choice was much more severe then than when we "dug out" Wilfred Rhodes for the last match. The general public attitude indicated that far more confidence was felt in the "veteran" Rhodes than in any youngster we could have selected in his place.

I am not saying this to exalt the power of the veterans, in which class I myself may be placed, nor to belittle the merits of our young players. I am simply stating facts and let them speak for themselves. Undoubtedly we cannot rely upon last year's veterans for much longer, if at all. But in selecting a team one must consider ability first, age and other questions of temperament arising afterwards as they bear on the matter of fitness and as affecting the full exercise of ability.

Trial matches convinced us that our first test teams last season would have to be

largely composed of tried players. Leaving out the Nottingham game, which was all too brief to give any enlightenment, the England elevens established a superiority over our visitors from the second test, and our supremacy was seldom in danger afterwards. There was no justification for radical changes in what looked like a winning side.

If it were a question of winning with a large proportion of old players, or of losing without them, I think I know what would be the answer of my countrymen. I am not saying that *was* the position, but I can imagine what would have been said had the men who had so materially assisted to establish an ascendancy at Lord's been "scrapped" for the later test games to make way for players, young or old, who had no such proof to offer.

All through the season we were "building" the side and, in considering the selections, always when claims were otherwise equal we gave preference to the young cricketers of promise. Ever we had our mind's eye on the future and the provision of suitable England cricketers for the test matches to come.

I am not alone among the veterans in welcoming the arrival of young cricketers to take our places. At the beginning of the 1926 season I was not at all anxious to play against Australia. My services were always at the disposal of the cricket authorities, but I had not the slightest desire to be played on my past record. If what talent I possessed were on the wane, I would have been the first to desire that I should stand aside.

Later, when it was discovered that I had sufficiently retained my form, I was quite pleased to play, and I will confess that I would not have missed that last test at Kennington Oval, with its attendant scenes, for a good deal. I was not *blasé* enough to miss the electric thrills that passed round the Surrey enclosure as we were getting the Australians out so quickly in their last innings and the fortunes of the game took a decisive swing in our direction.

What was the chief lesson of our 1926 tests? In my opinion that we have a promising fast bowler in Larwood, the Notts player—the youngest of our eleven. He should have more stamina this season, and I shall be disappointed if he does not go on adding to it for the next year or two. In the ordinary course of things he should be a certain selection for the next trip to Australia.

There will be three trials this season, and though they may ostensibly be with a view to the selection of the England team for

South Africa next winter, I have an idea that their secondary purpose will be to suggest more young players for the next England team for Australia in the winter of 1928.

Indeed we will have to be very careful whom we send to South Africa. For the very likelihood of a young player being marked down for Australia in 1928 may be very good reason why he should not be invited to go to South Africa in 1927. Consider the position of a player who goes on the South African tour and is afterwards wanted for Australia. He will have been playing continuous cricket for two and a half years—three English seasons interspersed with two tours abroad. It is too much for any cricketer, and particularly pernicious in the case of young cricketers who, I have noticed, are more liable to staleness than more experienced players.

I am writing this before the 1927 season has commenced and before anybody's latest form is known, and the next Australian tour is still nearly two years away, so one has to be careful about making predictions so far ahead. Yet I have an idea that G. T. S. Stevens will prove a most successful bat "down under"; he is the very type of batsman who shows at his best on Australian wickets and—still with Australian wickets in mind—he has certain unusual merits as a bowler.

One need not place Mr. Stevens in the same class with Mailey as a "googly" bowler, but, when his good balls are bringing him no success, he has an extraordinary faculty for getting a wicket and breaking up a dangerous partnership with a really "bad one." It is the sort of ball that often succeeds when much better balls are futile.

I have a vivid recollection of the way Arthur Mailey bowled me in the Oval test match with a rank full toss. This incident puzzled thousands who saw it and I was asked more questions about it afterwards than about any other happening in that historic game. Many ascribed all sorts of virtue to that ball and cunning to the bowler. Cunning there may have been but not the sort that many believed. It was not a good ball: it was simply rank bad, and I have no doubt Mailey knew it as well as anybody. For Mailey is an experienced and clever enough cricketer to know that in certain circumstances a bad ball is the most dangerous of all.

A. P. F. Chapman came in rather luckily to captain the eleven that won the test. He

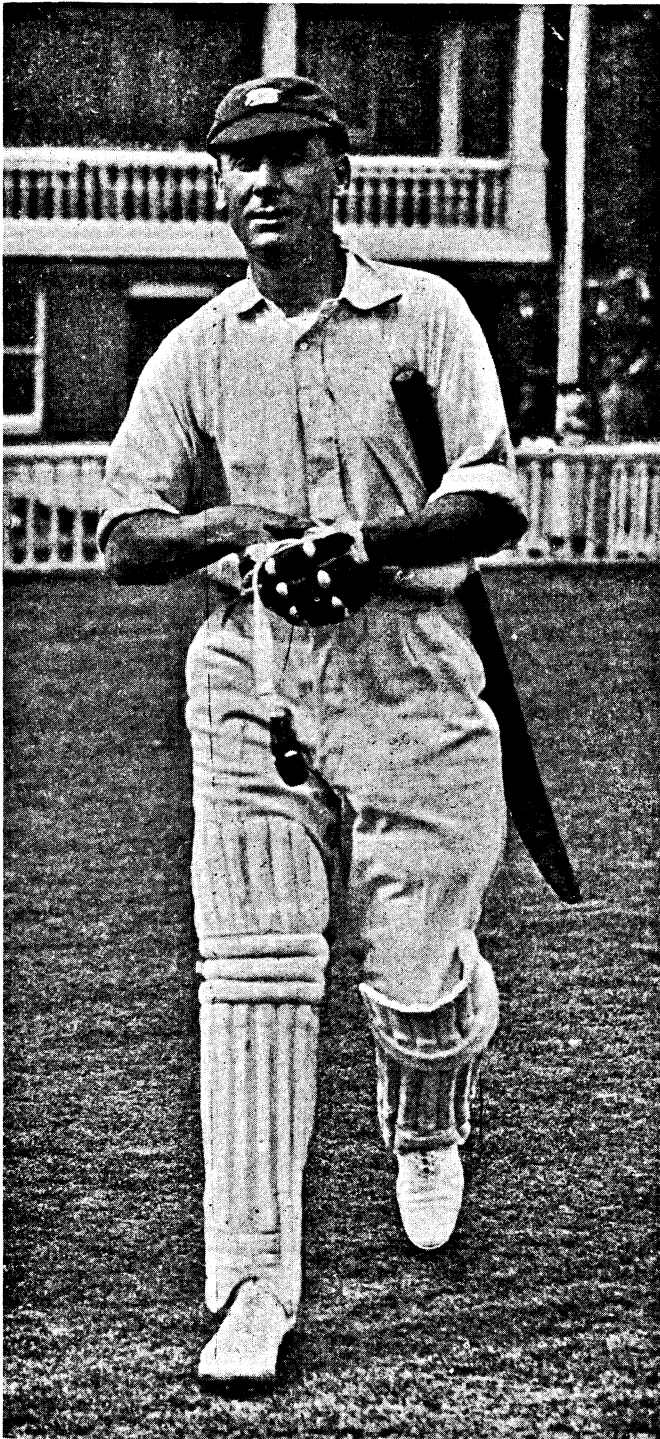


Photo by]

JACK HOBBS.

[Sport & General.

season, all round a sounder batsman. And if he retains his fine fielding he also should be a certain selection for Australia, though the question of captain is too open at this stage to say anything definite on that subject.

Others will have claims to lead the next team, including A. E. R. Gilligan, for cricket abilities are not the only consideration for this task, which among a welter of welcoming functions calls for the qualities of a diplomat. And no one can deny that Mr. Gilligan was a pronounced and popular leader on the social side of the last tour. As A. W. Carr, the Notts captain, is also likely to make the trip, the captaincy will be a matter for cricket's administrators.

Because we won the Ashes we must not be content to slack in our preparations for the future. We may have proved to be the better side last year, but, to be frank, we had little in hand, and Australia is always an infinitely more difficult proposition on her own playing-fields. Both sides were weak in bowling and we must stiffen this part of our next Australian side. Our cousins "down under" have seldom failed to find the man when the need was great, and doubtless, when necessary, "stars" will be replaced by other "stars" of equal if not greater magnitude.

Australia has always been the home of the "googly." It is a type of bowling that is more effective in Australia in

is a player of parts and ought to be better than ever if he gets plenty of cricket this

comparison with other types than in England. It is therefore most assiduously

cultivated. The Australian "googly" merchants, Mailey and Grimmett, were the most successful of their side even in England, and owing to the partial failure of the others were "bowled to death." England, however, could do with a bowler of their type and calibre—a pressing necessity when we are touring Australia.

We shall want all the variety and quality of attack we can muster, for indications are not wanting that whatever standard their *bowling* reaches in 1928-29 the Australians will have a wealth of young batsmen, one or two of whom we have seen over here. W. H. Ponsford, for instance, will be much more formidable on Australian wickets, and though he did not come up to expectations in England last summer he has proved since he went back by his record-breaking scoring that a tour in England has effected a great improvement, splendid as he was before.

I have seen suggestions that Australia will have to find a new captain, but I see no reason why Herbert Collins should not again lead Australia in test matches. Collins is still a young man, and, if he cares to play, why should he not be as good a batsman as ever? His judgment and experience should be of great value.

But that is a matter for Australia. We have to prepare our own side. Men will probably have to be found to replace others as well as myself. There are plenty of good batsmen, but I must confess to be a little worried about our wicketkeeper.

A few years ago there were half a dozen good wicketkeepers who could have been put into an England side, but unfortunately we have no one outstanding at the moment to follow Strudwick. We all thought Duckworth of Lancashire a rare find, but he was a trifle disappointing last season, though there is time yet for him to come on. Others will enter into consideration, but let us hope that a wicketkeeper will develop this season who will "select" himself. M. D. Lyon of Somerset is a possible selection. I think of him chiefly as a batsman, but he used to be a good wicketkeeper, though I don't think he puts on the gloves nowadays.

Another amateur who should be fully mature for Australia is R. E. S. Wyatt of Warwickshire. His tour in India will have done a lot for him, for he has been wonderfully successful out in the East, and I think he is certainly marked down as an England player of the future.

He is a bowler—a good change bowler—as well as a bat, though one cannot see him

going through a side. His batting is very solid. A couple of years ago he would have been described as merely a plodder, but last season he made a great advance and developed numerous new scoring strokes, so that his success in India was no surprise to me.

But no player has been more successful in India than my clubmate, Andrew Sandham, who may easily step into my position on the next Australian tour. As partner with Herbert Sutcliffe to open the innings, England need have no misgivings about Sandham. He is essentially a first-wicket batsman, and his fielding should not be forgotten. The selectors studied fielding last season, and that will be considered just as much when the next team for Australia is being made up.

It might be thought rather late in life for Ernest Tyldesley to be included, but he is a great player and has been distinctly unlucky in having up to now missed an Australian trip. C. Hallows of Lancashire and Leyland of Yorkshire have each a good claim and have the merit also of being left-handers. Still another Lancashire player who will develop and who has the making of a great player is Sibbles: he is young, a most useful bowler, and can bat better than well.

But next to the wicketkeeper our chief concern is the discovery of a good "googly" or leg-break bowler. This presents almost as much difficulty as the wicketkeeper, and at the moment I do not know whence we are to unearth him. It is about time the 'Varsities came to the rescue, and they will never have done a greater service to English cricket were they to present us with a couple of good bowlers at this juncture. Especially should we be grateful for a good slow bowler or another fast-medium bowler; either is the type of stock bowler for Australia.

F. Watson of Lancashire has two seasons to play himself farther into the limelight. K. S. Duleepsinhji will be watched even more keenly than last year, for if he is to be an England batsman he must prove himself this year. He has so far scarcely justified his high promise of 1925, but we had set a high standard for him. I would call attention also to the merits of Captain T. O. Jamieson of Hampshire, who is a better cricketer than most people realise.

Macaulay, the Yorkshire bowler, must try to recapture his "devil," and Maurice Tate should have a rest next winter. The latter has had too much cricket lately and got far more runs in India than I like. It is his

bowling we want in Australia, and if we are to have a real fighting chance to retain those mythical "Ashes," Tate should bowl there again as he did on our last tour.

I am quite sure that people at home do not grasp all the difficulties that confront a touring team—how much bigger the effort necessary to beat Australia "out there" than in England. A team on tour is always handicapped by injuries, illness, or breakdown. The ideal eleven for Australia should not have one member whose physical fitness is under suspicion. We should have a notice up: "No C 3 players need apply."

I may come under the ban myself, but that cannot be helped. Last year I felt no older and no less fit than three years before, but one cannot overlook the possibility that another two years at my time of life may make a real difference.

Our trial matches this year will of course be used largely for the benefit of the younger players, but the inclusion of a few "veterans" may be necessary for purposes of comparison, under the same conditions. The constitution of the teams should be such that our young batsmen can be tested against our admittedly best bowlers and our young bowlers against several of our best batsmen.

Trials in which all the players are below the highest standard cannot have the same value. That is a warning which it is probably well to issue beforehand, against ill-informed grumbles over the inclusion of

players whose qualifications are generally accepted; they will not be there on trial but to ensure that the young men are thoroughly tried.

The present cricket season will have many unusual points of interest, the visit of the New Zealanders, the new method of scoring points in the county championship and the use of the smaller ball. I may have another opportunity very soon of discussing these matters at greater length.

I would just say briefly at present that the New Zealanders may prove the equal of our best county sides, for they will have few difficulties of acclimatisation, as I believe their wickets and general conditions are not unlike our own.

The change in the scoring of points in the county championship will do away to a large extent with the strange position, which arose more frequently than many people imagined, when it actually paid a county well up in the table to avoid gaining a first innings lead when a definite decision of the match was seen to be impossible.

The smaller ball but brings us back to the situation before 1926, when the law governing the size of the ball was most honoured in the breach of it. Only last year was the law rigidly enforced, with the result that it very soon had to be altered. Players, and consequently manufacturers, had seen that for some time—and anticipated the change.



INVOCATION.

GIVE me to drink of all thy joys, O Life :

The blue of the sea, the passionate blue of sky,
The croon of waves in ever-musical strife

Upon the beach, the perfumed airs that lie
Slumbering along the valley's murmuring stream
Where all the flowers of the summer dream.

Give me the glory of sunrise opening wide

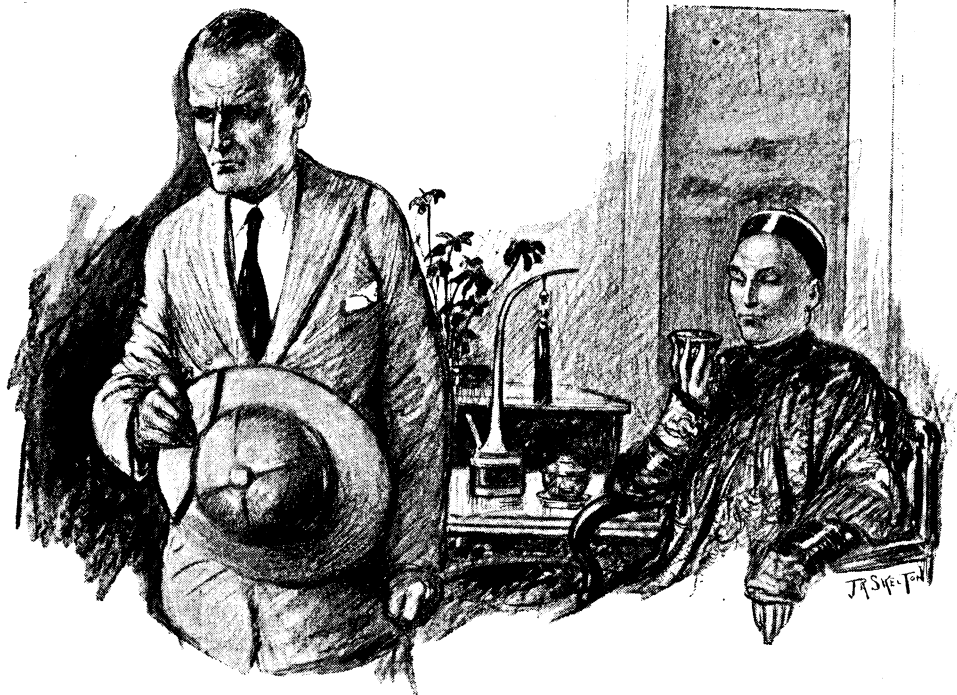
Its blossomy wonder for my dazzled eyes ;

Give me the dreaming peace of eventide

When the still lake reflects the fading skies,
And at the end I'll say with laughing breath :

Life hath sufficed ; show now thy beauty, O Death !

DOROTHY ROGERS.



"Then did John Hinstead walk out of the house, his head bowed and a numb agony in his heart."

THE WHITE ◉ ELEPHANT ◉

By REGINALD CAMPBELL

ILLUSTRATED BY J. R. SKELTON

JOHN HINSTEAD, elephant-trader, was distinctly up against it as he gazed at the yellow waters of the Me Nam River flowing sullenly past the foot of his camp, for news had reached him that morning that his daughter in far-away England had been seriously ill. The letter reporting this was from the doctor who had attended her, and the sum effect of it was that unless she could be sent away to sunnier climes before the coming winter, her chances of life were small.

He was alone in his tent, was John Hinstead, wherefore did two tears burst from his eyelids and roll slowly down his furrowed cheeks, for he loved his daughter Annie. But, he reflected anxiously, to

send her to Egypt and keep her there for at least six months in all the comfort that a delicate girl required, would cost a lot of money.

Several hundred pounds would be necessary for this, he told himself, yet here was he, in the backwoods of Siam, with scarcely fifty pounds to his credit, since for the last few weeks bad luck had dogged him. Anthrax and surra, those two deadly animal scourges of the East, had all but wiped out his stock of tame elephants, and two young wild tuskers had died on their way to market to be sold, thus causing him a loss of many thousands of ticals.

There was one slender chance, however, of obtaining a considerable sum of money

within the next two months. This was, that a great white elephant was reported by the natives to be grazing at the head of a wild herd not many miles distant from his camp.

Now Hinstead knew well that white elephants could fetch an almost fabulous price in Bangkok for the adornment of the king's palaces, but he also realised that it would cost much money to transport an elephant down the five hundred odd miles that separated him from the capital of Siam, and there was always the risk of the animal dying *en route*. He therefore decided at last that, should he succeed in capturing the elephant, he must sell it to some dealer in the little town of Lakon Lampang, three days' march away, and be content with allowing the dealer to pocket most of the profit.

For a while he stared with unseeing eyes into space, revolving in his mind which dealer he could best approach on the subject. He remained in indecision until his gaze fell on a houseboat that nestled on the edge of the river some fifty yards below his camp, and, in spite of his troubled thoughts, he smiled involuntarily.

"And that's another white elephant," he muttered to himself.

It was, indeed. The boat belonged to Lai Chin Suan, the richest Chinaman in the north, and was a relic of the only financial enterprise in which that gentleman had failed.

Some two years back Lai Chin Suan had got it into his head that oil existed in the spot where Hinstead now was camped. The Chink had therefore caused boring to be performed, and in order that he might be present to watch the operation in person, had had a costly houseboat built for himself and brought by water the entire way from Bangkok. It was the most wonderful houseboat that had ever been built in Siam, with luxurious fittings that a prince of the blood royal would have envied, and in it Chin Suan had lived for several months, until the lack of oil had convinced him of the failure of his enterprise.

Then, however, when he had decided to return to his home in Lakon Lampang, he had found to his dismay that the river had silted up on either side of the boat while the operations were in progress, with the result that the bottom of the craft had become firmly stuck in the soft sand that covered the river-bed. In vain had he

called forth his strongest tuskiers to endeavour to pull it out, for the boat had resisted all his efforts and remained glued in its place. At last, on realising that nothing less than expensive dredging operations would free it, with the sublime imperturbability of his race he had resolved to cut his loss from going any further, and there in the river the boat had remained, a costly, useless white elephant.

The sight of the boat decided Hinstead. He would choose its owner for the deal, as he knew the Chink well and had often done business with him before. He was a hard man and drove a hard bargain, but was as straight as a die and absolutely just, which could be said of very few other Chinamen in the north.

Raising his hands to his mouth, Hinstead shouted for his Lao boy, and a moment later was ordering him to make preparations for an immediate departure for Lakon Lampang.

* * * * *

Three days later Hinstead was standing before the Chinaman in the latter's comfortable house. After the usual courtesies had been exchanged, the white man explained the object of his visit. He, John Hinstead, knew more of the ways of elephants than any living being; news had reached him that a great white elephant was grazing near where the Chinaman had bored for oil. If he could capture the said animal and deliver it safely to Lakon, what would be the reward?

Lai Chin Suan sipped his tea leisurely, then his almond eyes looked straight into his visitor's face:

"And how much does the Lord Hinstead require?" he asked gently.

"Ten thousand ticals," was the answer.

Chin Suan drew in his breath with a hiss. "It is too much," he smiled. "I give five thousand."

Hinstead frowned. The Chink would obtain as much as fifty thousand ticals for the animal in Bangkok, and already the man was as rich as Cræsus through teak and elephant trading. He had interests in all sorts and conditions of firms in the capital, and it was rumoured that he even possessed a banking account in England in order to facilitate buying trade goods over there. Yet here was Chin Suan haggling over a paltry five thousand ticals, the equivalent of five hundred pounds. It was absurd.

For the better part of an hour Hinstead

argued, but the Chinaman was adamant, and at last the white man signed the contract. If the elephant were delivered, tamed and unhurt, at the Chinaman's home in Lakon, the captor would receive the sum of five thousand ticals in Siamese currency, Lai Chin Suan to lend the necessary number of tame tuskers and coolies for the purpose of rounding the animal up. If the elephant escaped, the white man to receive nothing for his pains.

The deal over, Hinstead drew an envelope from his pocket.

"Chin Suan," said he, "there will be much danger in this enterprise."

"There will," replied the Oriental smoothly.

"If Chin Suan learns that I am killed, he will do something for me?" The speaker handed the Chinaman the envelope, on which was scrawled his daughter's name and address.

"You will telegraph the news to her?" continued Hinstead. "After which you will collect and sell my kit, and then remit the proceeds to England for her? I ask this of Chin Suan as there are no other white lords in the town to do this on my behalf."

At the mention of Annie's name the Chinaman's face creased into smiles, for Hinstead in previous meetings had often spoken of his daughter, and had once produced her photograph.

"Ah, the little flower. She is well?"

"No, she is not well."

The Chinaman spread yellow hands; he appeared distressed; he made inquiries; he was vastly sympathetic. Hinstead, though loath to crawl to a Chinaman, made one last desperate bid for ten thousand ticals.

"It is partly for *her* that I want the money. Could Chin Suan not increase the price?"

For answer the other pointed to the contract, already stamped, signed, sealed, and witnessed.

And then did John Hinstead walk out of the house and order his coolie transport to return at once to the forest.

* * * * *

The great tusker was feeding. He stretched up his trunk, that had the strength of a steel cable and the spring of a live python, and brought down, with a rending and a crashing, the topmost branches of a small tree above his head. He curled the trunk round the torn-away branches, in one clean sweep stripped off the lush, green

leaves, and then placed the leaves in his mouth. The shadow-dappled rays of the setting sun trickled over his gigantic form and the great curved tusks that grew out from the massive head. His wrinkled, crocodile skin was of a dull grey-white colour, and showed up in marked contrast to the slaty-black hides of the remainder of the herd that grazed near by.

At last he left off feeding and rolled slowly towards the river for the evening bath. Behind him in leisurely gait followed the herd, which consisted mostly of females and calves, with here and there a sprinkling of young bulls.

Once in the stream, he selected a point where the water was deepest and wallowed lusciously, squirting jets of cool liquid over his heated back, while his companions squirmed, rumbled, rapped and chirruped like immense puppies at play.

Suddenly an unknown scent came borne to him on the faint evening breeze. He bombed to his feet and stared round him, to see that on the edge of the bank down which he had recently slithered were now six of his own kind, all tuskers, on whose heads were perched some strange beings who instinct warned him were men.

He trumpeted shrilly, and the herd rose upright and gathered about him. He swung his head in the direction of the opposite bank, to find that six more tuskers, all ridden by men, were watching him. Only the river-way, dotted with dry sand-bars, was clear of danger, and he resolved to lead his herd up-stream till they could branch off into the forest where no tame elephants threatened their liberty.

He turned and began shuffling away to the north, his companions following in single line ahead. As he lashed his great legs through the knee-deep water dozens of men-animals came running out of the fringing jungle. A moment later a chain of them stretched from bank to bank on either side of the herd.

They were shouting, singing and beating drums, were these men-animals as they stood thigh-deep in the water, and in each of their hands were lighted torches.

Then the tame tuskers, mounted by dusky Laos holding long pieces of stout rope, advanced slowly towards the herd.

The white elephant glared round on all sides. Before and behind him were the men-animals; to his left and his right were the tame elephants. Curling his trunk over one tusk, with a bellow of rage he surged

towards the pigmies in front of him. Jets of fire were thrown at him; smoke and flame caught him in the face; the thunder of tom-toms blared and drummed and cannoned in his waving ears. Dazed and half blinded, he reeled back into the herd who were jostling one another fearfully in his wake.

The tame elephants were nearly upon him now. He flung up his tusks as they approached and screamed defiance. His tame peers did not reply, however, but continued advancing silently towards him, urged on by the gentle pressure of the knees of their mahouts.

Then, without warning, the white elephant charged them. They faced him squarely, digging their stocky hind legs firmly in the loosened sand. Head-on he met the biggest of the cordon. The shock was terrific; the mahout was flung and the animal he had ridden was rolling in the sand. Bellowing, and unafraid, for here no fire threatened, the wild elephant charged his next adversary. One gigantic heave of the neck and another was overcome. The remainder backed away timidly from this great, roaring, bellowing monster that had the strength of ten elephants.

He saw the gap now made and signalled to his herd. Panic-stricken, their rope-like tails sticking straight out behind them, they raced through the cordon and up the bank.

Not until the last had vanished into the gloom of the jungle did he turn to follow them. Then, as he too rolled into the depths of the forest, he swung round his head and let out one last great roar of defiance at his aggressors.

As the green of the jungle swallowed him up, Hinstead surveyed Lai Chin Suan's two best tuskers that had been injured.

"You old devil, I'll get you yet," said he.

* * * * *

Night had spread her mantle over the sleeping world. Near Hinstead's camp the tame elephants, hobbled on their forefeet lest they should stray too far, were peacefully grazing. Suddenly one of them stopped feeding and let out a warning rumble. The rumble was taken up by the others, and they stiffened as if in anticipation of an attack.

Then they squeaked and rapped in fright, for a great white elephant was advancing noiselessly through the gloom towards them, with the herd in its rear.

Their wild brethren, however, seemed

to take no notice of them, for they passed them by without so much as an angry chirrup and disappeared, like gigantic shadows, in between the trees that bordered the camp.

Satisfied that their rest would be undisturbed, the tame animals flapped enormous ears of relief and resumed their interrupted feeding. . . .

The first thing that Hinstead knew was that his tent had enveloped him. He fought out of the writhing, whirling canvas and leapt to his feet. A pair of huge legs stamped perilously close to him, and, glancing rapidly round the little camp, he saw by the wan light of the moon that the clearing was alive with elephants.

He fled through them, escaping death by a miracle, and tore down the bank. Arrived at the water's edge, Lai Chin Suan's deserted houseboat loomed up in front of him. The instinct of self-protection that makes a man turn up his coat collar when a shell screams in the air assailed him, and, conscious only of the fact that he wished to hide himself from sight, he flung forward into the boat. In it were some of his coolies and servants who had also taken refuge there when the herd had so unexpectedly come upon them.

Hinstead descended into one of the cabins and, breathless, peered through a port-hole. From somewhere on the bank above crashings and bellowings and trumpetings told him that his camp was being laid waste with a thoroughness a demolition party would have envied.

Presently there was a silence, and a moment later, with a catch at the heart, the white man saw the form of the leader loom up at the edge of the slope above him, its great bulk looking like a Colossus in the pale light of the moon.

And then it slithered down the bank and made straight for the boat in which he crouched.

Love of life seized Hinstead. He rushed out on deck again and plunged into the water, followed by his brown companions. Together they waded desperately through the river till they had reached the comparative safety of the farther bank, when they glanced round frenziedly, seeking a tree to climb.

Hinstead found one and scrambled up it till he was perched on a thick branch high out of reach of the largest elephant's trunk.

Then through the tangle of branches his

straining eyes made out the side of the river he had so hastily quitted. The elephants were all round the boat, the boat that had cost Lai Chin Suan such a lot of money,

surveying the ruins of the houseboat and his camp. As he did so a strange lust of the hunt flooded his whole being, and he raised both arms to the purple vault of heaven.



"Saw by the wan light of the moon
that the clearing was alive with
elephants."

and were pounding it into matchwood.

At last, when only a few broken sticks remained of its former greatness, the white elephant flung up his tusks, making them gleam and dazzle in the moon-glittering darkness. His vengeance completed, he uttered a final trumpet, as if of warning, and then led his herd once more into the thick mazes of the forest.

A quarter of an hour later Hinstead was

"I won't give in," he cried to the stars. "I won't give in. Before God I won't."

With that he ordered his coolies to commence repairs forthwith on his torn tent and broken camp furniture, though the boat he left alone, since that builders'

masterpiece was far beyond the aid of any coolie.

Next day he wrote a report to Lai Chin Suan, in which he told of the laming of the Chinaman's two best tuskers and the destruction of the boat. While deeply regretting the same, he, John Hinstead, assumed, however, that as no mention of damage had been made in the contract, he would not be held liable for any.

A week later he received a reply from Lai Chin Suan to the effect that the Lord Hinstead was perfectly correct, and that the work of rounding up the white elephant was to be continued forthwith.

* * * * *

Followed six weeks of fruitless effort: of stalking, climbing and perspiring up hill after hill under the pitiless rays of the fiery tropical sun. Twice did the white man nearly have the giant creature captured, but each time by sheer strength the

animal escaped from his clutches. Hinstead was no longer attacked by the herd, however, for, profiting by previous experience, he invariably took the precaution to camp in some deep nullah where the elephants would have difficulty in coming upon him unawares.

At last, on one sunny October morning, when the English winter was drawing near and Hinstead was beginning to despair, the herd



"He fought out of the writhing, whirling canvas and leapt to his feet."

J. S. K. N. N.

was reported by his runners to be grazing at the sources of a dry creek that ran into the hills.

A brief inspection of this watercourse showed him that the bed had steep and unscaleable banks which rose sharply up on either side of it, and Hinstead resolved to make a last effort at effecting the white elephant's capture.

Under his directions a stout bamboo barrier, interlaced with wicked, pointed slivers of wood jutting inwards, was built across the creek at a point where the banks were steepest. Fifty yards farther up, round a bend that hid this erection from sight, another fence was prepared. This was similar to the first except that in its centre an opening some ten feet wide was left through which an elephant would be able to pass. This opening could, when desired, be closed by sliding across it a stout iron bar that had been prepared for the purpose.

Hinstead then sent a gang of coolies, armed with tom-toms and flares, up to the sources of the watercourse in order to drive the herd, if possible, down the creek, while he himself climbed into a tall tree that overlooked the trap, taking with him a piece of long rope, one end of which he had tied to the iron bar near the entrance.

After he had perched thus for hours, the beating of drums to the northward sounded on his straining ears, and a moment later the elephants rolled into sight. They were moving hurriedly down the creek, as if in search of peace and quietude, and were headed by the white tusker.

On seeing the fence, the leader halted abruptly and his great head swayed in indecision. To right and left were steep, unscaleable banks; behind him was fire, the only thing in the world of which he was afraid; ahead was something man-made, which he did not like. Then the shouting and the drumming of the coolies increased in severity, and with a grunt of disgust he shuffled his vast bulk through the entrance.

Quick as thought Hinstead, who had been watching with his heart in his mouth, pulled the rope, the iron bar swung into place before the next animal had time to follow, and the white elephant was caught at last.

He shouted to the coolies behind the herd to seek the safety of some tall trees, which they did with celerity. For a while the remaining elephants jostled one another round the closed entrance to the trap, then, on seeing that the way behind them now

was clear, they turned, bolted up the creek, and disappeared from sight, leaving their leader alone with his captors.

* * * *

Now the only method of breaking a full-grown wild elephant's spirit is to starve it into submission, which Hinstead proceeded to do. He had already caused the trap to be cleared of any plants or foliage that might serve as food, and for two days, from behind the safety of the spiked palings, he watched his captive.

Its movements were always the same; to and fro, to and fro, for hour after hour it would pace with noiseless, muffled tread the whole length of its prison. Every now and then the animal would halt, fling forward its huge, fan-shaped ears, and trumpet. Sometimes a screaming reply would echo through the forest from the herd that roamed free, then the lost leader would swing round its bulk and resume its ceaseless march.

On the third day of captivity it seemed to Hinstead's eyes to be a little weaker in its gait, and he slipped in three tame tuskers to rope it. The net result was one elephant killed and the mahout seriously injured, and the man knew that the proud spirit was yet unbroken.

On the fourth day Hinstead's face was haggard, for the man loved elephants second only to his daughter. In sheer pity he threw it a small portion of fodder, but the leviathan refused even to look at it, and continued its ceaseless pacing up and down.

By the evening of that day the knowledge came to the white man that though in all probability the elephant was weak enough now to be roped and led, yet it would never reach Bangkok. It would die before. It might just gain Lakon Lampang, so he told himself, in which case he would receive his hard-earned reward. But would this be playing the game with Lai Chin Suan? The Chink would see only a magnificent animal in the prime of life and condition, and would therefore hand over the money, but he would not see the broken heart that beat within that gigantic body.

Gradually the sun mellowed over the quiet jungle, casting tints of soft beauty over the towering teak trees and the elfin-like bamboos that whispered in the cool, evening breeze, and still the man watched the elephant, his breast torn with conflicting emotions. On one side—the desire to do the straight thing by his employer, together

with pity for his captive, prompted him to waive the reward. On the other—little Annie, weak, consumptive, longing for the dry, healing air of Egypt, called aloud to him for life.

He remained a prey to his troubled thoughts until he saw, with a start of surprise, that the elephant had at last come to a halt and was staring at the fodder. Its colossal head was rolling from side to side and a deep rumbling came from within its body. It flicked its trunk towards the fodder, then withdrew it rapidly from the bundle, as if resisting temptation. Then back came the trunk once more as, torn between the pangs of hunger and the desire not to surrender, it, too, fought a battle with its soul.

Eventually, after still not having eaten, it raised its head and looked straight at the white man standing behind the bars. And Hinstead now saw that the splendour and the fierceness in its mien were gone and that rather did it look like a child of the wilds whose heart has been broken.

A blinding mist came into Hinstead's eyes, for he knew that it was crying, crying in some strange elephantine language of its own.

Scarce conscious of his actions, he reeled towards the entrance and swung back the iron bar.

At the sound the leviathan turned and saw the open exit. It walked slowly through, but made no movement to attack the tiny white man standing, white-faced but unafraid, beside the fence. Instead it rolled on a few paces up the creek, when it swung round its bulk and faced its deliverer once more.

The great, curved tusks were now up-flung and the whole mien was changed. It drooped no longer, but stood four-square to the wilds. As the last rays of the setting sun shone fully upon its magnificent form, it seemed to Hinstead to be some sublime epitome of the forest, and he felt he was in the presence of something greater than he.

And then it blared forth one great screaming trumpet such as never had Hinstead heard before. But in that trumpet was no longer any note of rage or defiance. Rather did it sound like the salute that one conqueror gives to another.

As the echoes died away the white elephant turned again and slowly, majestically, rolled up the creek to rejoin its lost herd and disappear for ever from the ken of man. . . .

"May God forgive me, Arnie," sobbed Hinstead as, back in his tent, he gazed at his daughter's photograph. "But I couldn't do it, I couldn't do it."

* * * * *

Three days later he was standing before Lai Chin Suan in the latter's house at Lakon Lampang.

"And the elephant?" asked the Chinaman blandly.

"The elephant," answered Hinstead with an effort, "is free. I caught it, then I let it go. Also one of your tuskers was killed."

The Oriental's yellow features betokened no surprise. "And why did the Lord Hinstead let it go?"

"Because, though it would have lived to reach Lakon, never would it have reached Bangkok alive."

"But that was not in the contract," complained the other.

"It was not," agreed Hinstead. Then suddenly his reserve broke down. "Lai Chin Suan can give me no other work?" he asked pitifully.

The Chinaman spread eloquent hands. "This has been bad business," he said with an air of finality. "I have spent money for nought. I have lost an elephant. All is finished."

And then did John Hinstead walk out of the house, his head bowed and a numb agony in his heart.

When he reached his tent on the outskirts of the town a coolie approached him with home letters brought up by the little train that afternoon. One was from Annie. Lifelessly he opened it. It was a hasty scrawl, and read as follows:

"DARLING DADDY,—

"It was very, very naughty of you to send me so much money. One thousand pounds! Just fancy! Why, you must be getting ever so rich out there. I'm off to Egypt next week, but already I feel just heaps better.

"Will write more fully in a day or two, but am terrifficalliy (how *does* one spell that word?) busy getting ready to go at present.

"All my love, darling.

"From your ever affectionate daughter,
"ANNIE.

"P.S.—The bank told me the money came by t.t., which they explained meant telegraphic transfer, whatever that means. What a funny code name you use. Lai

Chin Suan. How did you come to think of a name like that?

"A."

Ten minutes later Hinstead was reeling into the Chinaman's house again.

"What is this?" he demanded almost fiercely as he told of the gist of the letter.

The Chinaman smiled. "I send the little flower a present. I think it make her well," said he.

"I will repay you," said Hinstead brokenly, "if I stay out here till the end of my life."

The Chinaman drew in his breath with a hissing sound. "The Nai Hinstead has already repaid me," he answered.

"I . . . I do not understand," muttered Hinstead.

"Listen. You know my houseboat?"

Hinstead nodded.

"It no use to me. It what you English call white elephant. When I have it made in Bangkok I insure it against fire and accident with Chinese Insurance Company."

"Oh," said Hinstead.

"Then, when I no can use it any more,

I wish for accident." The speaker paused and sipped his tea.

"No," he continued, on seeing the look in Hinstead's eyes, "I not make real burning to look like accident. That what you English call not straight, and not fair to insurance company. Then you tell me boat have real accident. I send in my claim with your letter. Then I say. But for the Lord Hinstead I get no money. I like to make you present. But you proud, like all English. You no take gift from Chinaman. So I think of the little flower. It is good?"

"It is good," echoed Hinstead dully.

"See," the Chinaman showed him a cheque. It was for the sum of forty thousand ticals, or four thousand pounds, in complete and final settlement of the claim, supported by the white man's report. The cheque was made payable to Lai Chin Suan, and was signed by the head of the insurance firm.

And the approving signature was the same as that of the payee on the back.

"I head of that company, you see," smiled Lai Chin Suan. "The Lord Hinstead will take tea?"



UNACCOUNTABLE BRIGHT THINGS.

WHEN Winter hatred is outworn
And wild birds with sweet insolence
Wing back and perch upon the thorn . . .
Then is the time of no pretence.

Shall we not take our lovely stand
Beside the blossom-loaded tree
As for whose very sake the land
Were honeyed with such minstrelsy?

For Beauty friends the eyes that most
Do hunger for her, and she rings
His feet that find her with a host
Of unaccountable bright things.

A. NEWBERRY CHOYCE.

THE SEEDS OF DISSENSION

By H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

ILLUSTRATED BY STEVEN SPURRIER

THE world north of the Spanish parallels is more sane and less extravagant than the world south of them, less wonderful, too, if indeed one thing can be less wonderful than another in this most extraordinary world.

Starting from the North Pole and coming along down the 100th meridian of longitude a traveller from Mars would notice the change from the cold sobriety of Siberia to the warmer desolation of the Mongolian plains, but it would be about 40° North, the parallel that cuts the great loop of the Hoang Ho, that Earth would begin to hint of her secrets and tell of her marvels; of the little Gobi, of the Prayer-Wheels of Tibet, the temple bells of Burmah, the mysteries of Siam and the sun-blaze of Sumatra wherein he might walk at noon without casting a shadow.

He would see the rose turn to the lotus and the pine to the palm and the scrub of the Kuku-Nor Mountains to the Shan Forests and the mangroves of Malaya, passing, in fact, from world to world and reaching a world at last where Magic sits dealing with song and fire and passion and poison, filling with the dreams of the opium-eater the blossom of a flower and with the powers of hatred and destruction the seed of a fruit, which latter fact was brought home to me by Captain Jimmy Lasker, met with in the "Old Ship," a house of call not far from Meigg's wharf, San Francisco. The place is gone, gone like Bones and Sullivan's oyster-bar and Players, and with them have gone a race of men that will never be replaced. For now the tanker ties up where the Island schooners used to abide between their six months' trips and the iron grain ships fill themselves with Californian wheat through hose pipes, where the old Cape Horners hung, emptying themselves, or full and ready for their crews of Shanghaied men.

Lasker was old enough to remember the *Three Brothers*, that hardest of hard ships, old enough to remember copra before the soap companies had organised the trade. His father, Hiram, dated back before the time of Bully Hayes and Steinberger, and had been in sandalwood and taken his whack out of black-birding; a Pacific family, one might say, whose memories, could they have been connected and strung out and put in print, would have furnished a book more interesting than any romance.

"The old man was a bit the other side of ordinary," said Captain Jimmy (he was talking of his father); "it wasn't so much cleverness as the way he had of seein' behind things, if you understand me. It wasn't scarcely natural. I reckon if he'd stuck to the land he'd have been President of the United States, for he could tell mostly what other chaps were thinking of, let alone doing behind his back, but he preferred Nature and God's good air, and the wharf rats and ship-chandlers and Port officers and Customs and such-like gave him all he wanted of mankind; and they never got the better of him—no, sir, they never got the better of him. When Juan—what's his name?—the President of one of them South American States, was howlin' for guns way back in the seventies to fight his neighbours with, dad took him the guns, Veterli rifles, worth their weight in Mexican dollars; took them out of 'Frisco harbour, contraband of war, right under the noses of the Customs and never paid a penny graft money. Dad was dead against bribery and corruption when he had to pay the bribes. Besides, it was a matter of intellect with him same as a game of chess, and when Juan diddled him of the dollars he done Juan in, in a way that'd take me half a day to tell you of. He didn't believe in Revenge and had no use for the word; he

called it making his adjustments. He adjusted Bully Stevens in Omao with a bullet in his stomach for a black job Bully had done seven years before at Rapa down in the Paumotos; seven years was nothing to dad. He didn't believe in keeping wrath hot, believed in cold storage and always kept his adjustment gruel there, as many a man got to know who'd run crooked in dealings with dad.

"But what I've been telling you is rough stuff and doesn't show the workings of his mind, which was trickier than Billy Shakespeare's Puck, but what I'm going to tell you now is bearing on the point, and it's the frozen truth though it sounds a sight more like conjuring.

"Dad, away about the time I was born, was ramping about the Pacific hiving honey, as you might say, like a bumble-bee going round a garden. Those were the times when there was money in trade; you just think of it, Nauru hadn't been exploited nor the shell lagoons stripped, sandalwood was still a business proposition and copra was beginning to flower, so to speak, and it was all sail, not the chunk of a paddle or beat of a screw from Frigate to the Kermadecs. Dad owned his ship, a tops'1 schooner of a hundred and twenty, the *Penguin*, built by Mathesons and broke up only a year or two ago. He'd been running a cargo from New Zealand to Brisbane when he heard of business to be done in the Arafara Sea, and he clapped on and came through Torres Straits in the South-East Monsoon when Torres is clear of fog.

"Now you go through Torres and it's like shutting a door on the Pacific. You're inside a bit of old Asia and you hit all sorts of funny places and people and flowers and trees and fruit that's different from anywhere else.

"Dad had along with him a young chap by name of Fergus. Fergus died only five years ago. He worked for me just as he had worked for dad, stuck to the family as handy-man and agent and what-not, but in the days I'm telling you of he was only just a lad, a sort of apprentice berthing aft but pulling on the ropes the same as the hands; he was of an inquiring mind and dad used to take him ashore and show him things and talk to him just the same as if he was a son. Dad didn't know fear, and at Papua, where he took Fergus ashore exploring, he didn't mind the head hunters, and Fergus told me once when we were talking of old days that they struck a wigwam

there where heads were hanging to dry and the heads weren't bigger than a tangerine orange. They have some dodge for shrinking a head that no one knows or ever will know, and they have poisons that'll kill if you smell them, let alone taste them, and witch doctors that'll raise evil spirits, which seems like bringing coals to Newcastle, seeing the sort of chaps they are in those parts.

"But the point I'm coming to is the pips the old man brought aboard. The devil's pips he called them.

"Fergus wasn't sure whether it was on the Papuan coast or at Floris the old man went ashore to stay with a trader called Lomax. It doesn't matter, anyhow, but he was clear about Lomax. This chap was a white man by birth, but a native by breeding. Fish-belly white his face was, and his hair, which was tow-coloured with the sun, hung in his eyes till he'd shake it back to look at you, and then he'd look at you under his eyebrows. Fergus said the sight of him was enough to give you the jimjams, and he came off in a canoe with nothing on him but a net undervest and a necklace of berries.

"Dad didn't mind. Dad liked him. He always had a taste for queer things, and he went ashore with him and stayed two days prospecting for gold and came back aboard with a bunch of precious coral and six pearls that Loffar of Market Street paid him six hundred dollars for. Six bottles of gin was the price he paid for the lot.

"He took them down to the cabin and, when he'd stowed them in a locker, he took three big fruit pips, the size of walnuts nearly, out of his pocket and showed them to Fergus.

"‘Look at them,’ said he, ‘what do you make of them?’

"‘Nuts,’ said Fergus.

"‘Nuts your eye,’ says the dad. ‘Bumbo shells more like. Plant one of them things in any place where there are niggers enough to make a fight and let it grow and you'll see the fun. Murder and slaughter let loose. Lomax grew them or got them, anyhow, and gave me his word for it.’

"Now Fergus was a hard-shell Scotsman, but he had his superstitions, and had taken such a down on Lomax that he was pushed into dislike enough for the things to wish them overboard. But dad laughed at him and stuck them in the locker, and they tramped the anchor out of the mud and put out, and the last thing they saw was

Lomax on the beach with a gin bottle in his hand.

"The ship was full up, they'd taken in cargo here and there, paying in dollars, and they'd done so well that dad reckoned his fortune was made. The deck cargo alone would have paid for the trip, and leaving that aside the old *Penguin* was over-loaded.

"Meantime the monsoon had changed and Torres had let down a curtain of fog, fog and dirty weather, almost sure death to

face; but dad never bothered about death, he got through.

"He could smell reefs.

"In the

than ordinary decent waves, and every now and then a ton of water would come down on the deck like a ton of clay. The lashings of the deck cargo, which was mostly sandal-wood billets, began to give, and then went the cargo after them, the long boat was stove and sent galley west and the hens and pig that made the live-stock went with the long boat; there was two foot of water in the fo'c'sle.

" 'There you are,' said Fergus, 'look at that sea, all our deck cargo gone, not to mention the live-stock. Get down and heave those pips over before we get it worse'; but the dad, clinging with his teeth to the weather rail, as you might say, only laughed. He wasn't going to give in to any superstition, and an hour or two after the wind dropped as if it knew it couldn't beat him, and next day with a full sailing breeze from the westward they came



"This chap was a white man by birth, but a native by breeding. Fish-belly white his face was, and his hair, which was tow-coloured with the sun, hung in his eyes till he'd shake it back to look at you, and then he'd look at you under his eyebrows."

middle of the smother Fergus remembered those pips. Three Jonahs he reckoned them, but the old man only laughed, saying there were no niggers on board, so they needn't bother.

"But bother came without needing it.

"South of Entrecasteaux Island in the Solomons it began to blow from the north with a cross sea owing to the current that runs there at a three-knot clip. Fergus said that the sea was more like the sea in the dead centre of a cyclone than anything else he'd ever seen, the waves were more like little waterspouts or big shell splashes

through between Malaita and Christoval into clean open sea. 'And now for 'Frisco,' says dad. 'Deck cargo or not, we've got a full hold and the pump shows we're tight, and we'll call maybe at one of the Ellices and pick up some more live-stock, seeing you're so fond of chickens,' and he laughed as if he'd made a good joke; but he didn't laugh long, for two days after the wind fell dead like a shot bird, and the old *Penguin* lay in her own shadow with the Santa Cruz Islands three hundred miles away to southward and nothing to north or east or west of her but the blue, blue sea.

"It was flat as a plate-glass window only for the swell running up from the south, the deadest of calms ship ever struck, and the water casks weren't none too full. They were close on to the Equator, so the weather wasn't cold. Fergus told me he used to lie awake at night dreading to see the sun rise. He said the sun would come up as if he was pushing his head through the water. He said the sea seemed to stick to the sun even after he was free and then fall back with a big plop and a shiver and show itself as the same old plate-glass sea. He said the cockroaches used to come on deck to cool themselves at sun-up and before they could get back below they'd be stuck by the hot pitch between the deck planking; he said they got so cute after a while that they only made their excursions fore and aft so's to be able to come back along the planks without crossing the pitch lines—which was a lie.

"I've always held to the truth; once a chap gets to embroiderin' on the truth, there's no knowing where his fancy-work will take him to; but leaving the cockroaches out and his statement that the flying fish came aboard fried and ready for table, there's no doubt it was a big calm.

"It lasted five days and the current had been carrying them all the time, so that when a breeze sprung up an island showed itself away to the south-east and there was nothing to do but steer for it.

"The water was all but out and the island showed itself big and promising; it was a high island, and after the rains the glass showed a waterfall like a white horse's tail coming down the cliffs.

"'There you are,' said dad, 'you and your pips and bad luck—where's the bad luck now?'

"'We ain't at 'Frisco yet,' replied the other,—which taking it by and large wasn't more than the truth.

"They hauled in close. There were reefs, but big breaks showed with the blue water running in, and the *Penguin* nosed her way through without a scratch and dropped the hook in twelve-fathom water before as pretty a beach as you'd wish to see, with the waterfall cascading down to it and making a trough at the foot of the cliff that stood at the north end.

"The north end of that island is all high; southward it runs pretty flat and thickly wooded. But you can see the place for yourself any time you wish to go there; *Eromaya* is its name and it does a big trade

now in copra, but in those days it was wild.

"Three or four fishing canoes were lying on the beach, but not a sign of a native.

"Jackson, the mate, didn't like the look of that, but dad didn't bother. He took off a boat's crew well armed and floated the water casks on shore and began to fill up.

"He'd done this business and the casks were all ready to be towed off when out of the trees without word or warning came a flight of arrows. Most fell short, but one of them hit Jackson in the arm.

"The boat crew had their *Veterli* rifles handy and let fly into the trees, doing good work, to judge by the yells that followed.

"'That'll learn them,' said dad. Then he broke up the canoes on the sand to learn them some more, and the casks were got on board, and Jackson.

"The arrow was still sticking in his arm. Dad cut off the barb and drew the thing out, and Jackson didn't mind. He was as tough as a hickory nut and went about his work getting the casks stowed, and then, all of a sudden, he went groggy and dropped on the deck, and half an hour after he was dead of convulsions. The thing had been poisoned.

"Fergus said dad nearly went off his rocker. He cursed and swore, wanted to land and sweep the woods, but not a man of the crew would follow him—and no wonder. They did Jackson up in a hammock ready to take him out and drop him in blue water, and down below, when the old man had cooled off a bit, Fergus tackled him.

"Those devil's pips had been growing in Fergus's head as if they'd been planted there; all his superstitions were working overtime and he was in that state of mind he didn't care what he said. So he up and said to the old man:

"'I told you,' said he, 'I told you to chuck the things overboard. First thing we run into fog and dirt, next our deck cargo went, next we were near fried alive, now Jackson's dished, and he was the only man on board beside you could work a reckoning; next will be taken is yourself, and where'll we be? That's what I want to know, where'll we be? I'm thinking of my own skin,' he says, 'if you won't think of yours—chuck them things overboard and own up you were wrong.'

"Now, as Fergus told me after, he could see the old man had come to the same belief as himself but was too proud to own up.

"He was dying to get rid of the things

but his pride wouldn't let him give in and chuck them overboard.

"Then a bright idea seemed to hit him on the head.

"'You're talking bilge,' said he, 'there's no harm in these things to a white man. Niggers—I'm not saying, since they're full of superstitions and fetishes and such, and anyhow Lomax said they'd play the cat and racket with niggers—so for the fun of the thing,' he says, 'and hoping for the best, I'll plant them on these chaps here.'

"'But you're not going ashore,' said Fergus.

"'Aren't I?' says the old man.

"He went to the locker and fetched the things out and put them in his pocket, and up he came on deck; not one of the crew would put hand to an oar, so he went ashore in the dinghy, sculling himself, but before he started he made the chaps let fly a couple of volleys into the trees.

"'That'll keep them down,' said he, 'if they're still about.'

"Fergus said the old man went as matter-of-fact as if he'd been going ashore to post letters; he'd gone to the galley and got a spoon to do the digging with, and it was sticking out of his pocket as he stood on the beach before turning to the trees.

"He was twenty minutes out of sight before he came from the trees on to the beach again."

II.

CAPTAIN JIM halted for refreshments and then resumed.

"Now a minute is a mighty long time, you measure it and see, and twenty minutes is twenty times as long, and the old man all that while had been grubbing about in a wood full of devils armed with poison arrows and shark-tooth spears looking for suitable places to plant his nuts. That shows his character better'n books could give it. Didn't know fear, only fear of being made small of and put in the wrong, always did his job thorough even if it was only the job of trying to put poison in the way of a lot of ballyhoos that were safe bound for perdition, anyway.

"Then he came on board and they got the hook up and put out. 'And that's done, anyway,' says the old man, which it certainly was.

"They got back to 'Frisco safe and sound and got good prices, and dad he continued on his ways till fifteen years later he died off the Australs of blackwater fever come

back on him owing to a row he'd had with the French. I was on board. There was a will at the lawyers' in 'Frisco leaving the *Penguin* and all its property to me, with Fergus in charge as a sort of guardian and boss of the show till I was twenty-one, which wouldn't be for some years yet, and Fergus he stuck to his job treating me as man to man with no flappedoodle like elders serve out to youngsters, and we got knit together into sort of working partners and we didn't let the show down. We made money. There was money to be made then. In those days there were newseys running about Market Street selling the evening papers that are now millionaires, the Paumotos hadn't been properly opened, nor the phosphates islands properly worked. Louis Becke, the best gentleman that ever trod a plank, was in the land of the living, and Bishop Selwyn was showing the kanakas that white men weren't all of the same stamp as a few holy horrors notwithstanding whom the Pacific was better in those days than 'tis now. The Chink and the low white hadn't made good and the kanakas hadn't taken to civilisation of low sorts. We did good business and kept sober. It wasn't that the money we made was so much as the fact that it was all coming in and little going out. Stop spending and you start saving was our motto, and it carried us along. We made voyages right down to New Zealand and right up to the Marshalls, and the years went on, till one day coming up to the Ellices we sighted an island and Fergus says, 'There's Eromaya.'

"'There's Eromaya,' he says, 'the place where they did in Jackson and where your dad landed to plant them things he reckoned would put a spell on the niggers—twenty years ago—twenty years ago—how time does run!'

"'Let's put in and have a look,' says I.

"He hung off, said he didn't want to shove his nose into no hornet's nest, but seeing that we were armed with Winchester repeaters, and me being young and with a taste for a scrap, he gave in and we altered the course and ran for the island.

"I wanted to see the place, same as people always want to see where murders have happened; besides, there was the memory of the old dad.

"There was a six-knot breeze and the reefs were easy, and Fergus, who never forgot anything with a sounding to it or a rock to be avoided, remembered at sight the

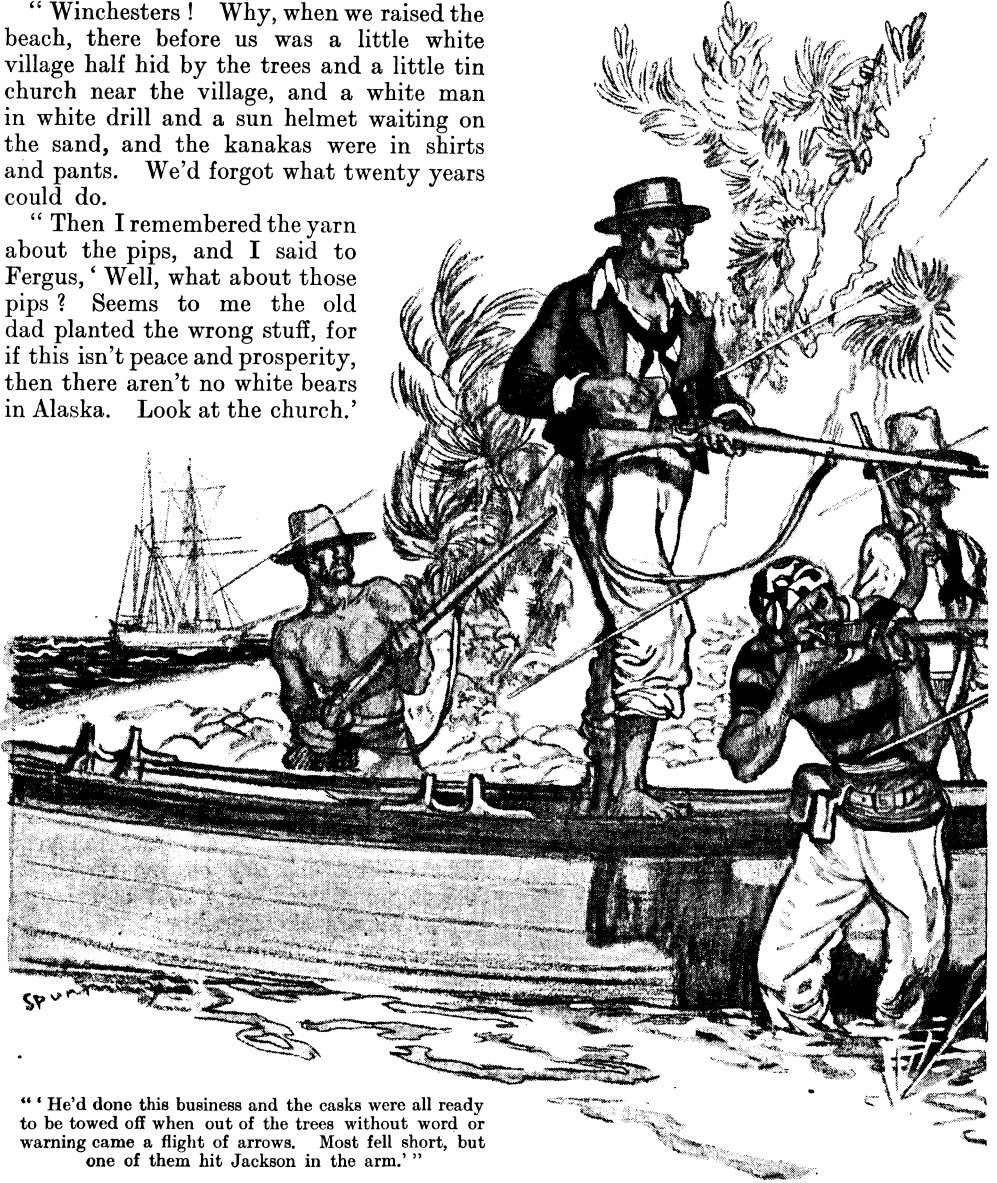
passage they'd used those long years ago.

"We'd had the Winchesters and ammunition on deck all ready for trouble.

"Winchesters! Why, when we raised the beach, there before us was a little white village half hid by the trees and a little tin church near the village, and a white man in white drill and a sun helmet waiting on the sand, and the kanakas were in shirts and pants. We'd forgot what twenty years could do.

"Then I remembered the yarn about the pips, and I said to Fergus, 'Well, what about those pips? Seems to me the old dad planted the wrong stuff, for if this isn't peace and prosperity, then there aren't no white bears in Alaska. Look at the church.'

chap Leeson was, nothing against him but a squint which he couldn't help, being a



"'He'd done this business and the casks were all ready to be towed off when out of the trees without word or warning came a flight of arrows. Most fell short, but one of them hit Jackson in the arm.'"

"'Something seems to have fetched loose,' said Fergus. 'I reckon missionaries have been tangling things up. Anyhow, we'll see.'

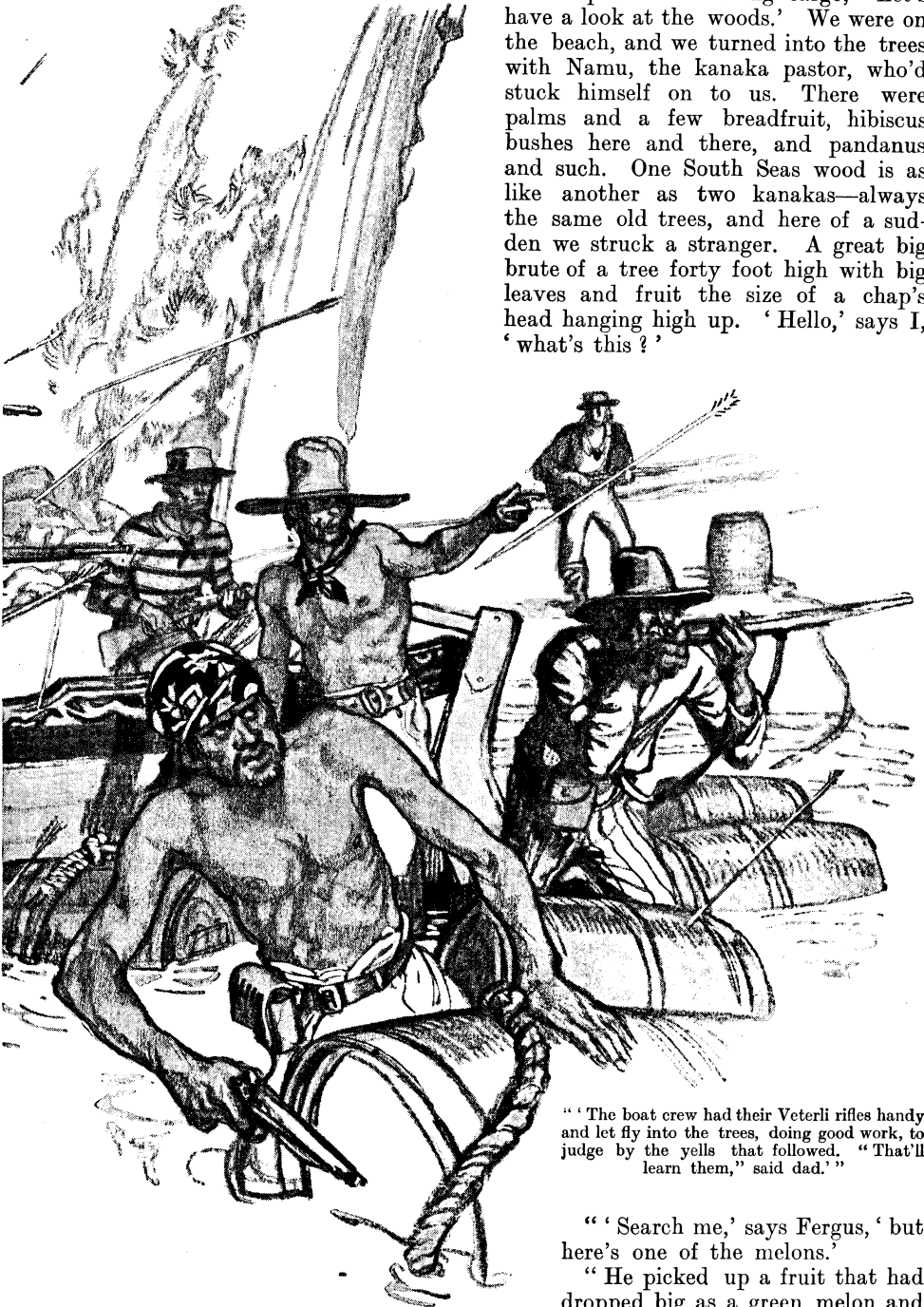
"We dropped the hook and came ashore. The white man's name was Leeson. He was a trader, been there four years, said the place was civilised when he came and Adams the missionary visited every three months or so and there was a native pastor. Nice

natural infirmity. We dined with him and talked trade. He'd got some bearer bonds in a silver smelting company. He wanted trade goods and said he couldn't pay us in copra as his copra was bespoke, but he'd let us have the bonds; they stood at twenty dollars, and he produced a year-old San Francisco *Herald* and showed the market quotation, which was twenty, said the company was firm as the Alleghany

Mountains, and the stock was sure risen by this, but he'd risk it and let us have a thousand dollars worth of bonds for a thousand dollars worth of trade. We

ago and Jackson's death, and he laughed and said that was old times and things were different now, which was the truth.

"Next morning I said to Fergus whilst the chaps were breaking cargo, 'Let's have a look at the woods.' We were on the beach, and we turned into the trees with Namu, the kanaka pastor, who'd stuck himself on to us. There were palms and a few breadfruit, hibiscus bushes here and there, and pandanus and such. One South Seas wood is as like another as two kanakas—always the same old trees, and here of a sudden we struck a stranger. A great big brute of a tree forty foot high with big leaves and fruit the size of a chap's head hanging high up. 'Hello,' says I, 'what's this?'



"The boat crew had their Veterli rifles handy and let fly into the trees, doing good work, to judge by the yells that followed. 'That'll learn them,' said dad."

"Search me,' says Fergus, 'but here's one of the melons.'

"He picked up a fruit that had dropped big as a green melon and covered with big prickles.

"Namu couldn't tell us what it was, said

agreed, and the bargain was struck.

"We told him of the happenings of years

the tree had only just come into fruit, and we made a cut in it with Fergus's knife and mushy stuff came out and a smell like Chinatown after the rains. We dropped it and came back to the beach.

"It wasn't till next day that the idea came to me and I said to Fergus, 'Say—that tree couldn't have come from dad's planting, could it?'

"He only laughed. 'Look at the size of it,' says he.

"Well, it's had over twenty years to grow,' said I, 'and the thing smelt like the devil anyhow.'

"Well, he planted three of those things,' said Fergus. 'Where's the other two?'

"Maybe only one came up,' I says, and then we dropped it.

"We put out two days after, got to 'Frisco and found the silver smelting company's bonds snyde. At least the thing was wild-cat anyhow and had gone bust nine months before.

"Fergus tore up his hair—what he had of it—by the handful, swearing to skin Leeson alive, which wasn't much good seeing Leeson was three thousand miles away and Eromaya out of trade tracks.

"Well, he'll get it some day,' he says, turning down the gas-jet at last and putting the lid on the pot; 'he'll get it some day,' says he, 'from yours truly, and what he'll get won't be a booky of roses.'

"Then he said no more, cut off the juice and seemed to have forgotten Leeson. We'd got our living to make and our old ages to put by for, and strange enough after that streak of bad luck came a streak of good, for we hit a good line in short trips to Honolulu, which was just beginning to open its eyes in those days; now it's a cross between a bathing beach and a pineapple canning factory; it was different then.

"A year and a half we were on that line and then we were on the coast between 'Frisco and the Gulf of California and s'uth'ard of that; then business took us to the Santa Cruz Islands, and lo and behold! as the story-books say, we found ourselves within reach of Eromaya again three years and a few months from the time we were there last.

"And now,' says Fergus, 'I'm going to skin that chap Leeson.'

"I was none too willing. There was no law running in Eromaya those days and I foresaw fights and disturbances. However, I fell in with him and we put the helm to starboard and ran south-west till the island

showed, and when we got in there on the beach we saw a white man. But there were no houses, all the little white houses were gone, including Leeson's bungalow, and the white man wasn't Leeson.

"He was Adams the missionary, whose schooner had dropped him here for a few days whilst she ran on to Papeetong—a hundred miles south.

"What's this I'm seeing?' asks Fergus, when we'd introduced ourselves and shook hands.

"War and the wickedness of man,' says Adams, 'backed and assisted by Nature in one of her wicked moods and some blankety—excuse me—blankety blank fool who must have planted a Durian tree on this once smiling island.'

"Tell us about it,' says Fergus, giving me a nudge, and leading the way up to a fallen palm lying in the shade where we sat down, 'give us the happenings.'

"Three years ago,' said Adams, 'when I landed here I found two of the natives quarrelling over something; a big fruit it was, and I recognised at once it was a Durian.

"I'd had experience of this thing, for I'd been several years in Papua and I'd seen two villages wiped out owing to fights over the possession of a Durian tree. The very bush-pigs fight for the fruit. One scarcely wonders—it tastes like chocolate creams and garlic and smells like a billy-goat, but once you've eaten it you long for it more and more. It's a stimulant, it's all sorts of things, and knowing this I ought to have had the tree cut down. I found it; it had evidently only just come into fruit, and I ought to have had it cut down. Instead, I told the trader Leeson to do it, and he only laughed. He was always against me, said it was grandmother's talk and told me to mind my own business—which wasn't tree-cutting.

"Now I'll tell you what that tree did to this island, and it has only fruited three times. First time it only made individuals fight for possession of its unholy products; the second time they quarrelled worse; and the third time, only a few months ago, it split the island into its two old tribes that had become fused, brought to life again clubs and poisoned arrows and let loose battle, murder and sudden death. Leeson, seeing his copra houses being fired, tried to stop it, he was killed, everything was destroyed, even my little church, and of all the people of Eromaya only thirty are left,

mostly women, still hiding in the woods.’
 “I couldn’t help cutting in. ‘My old dad,’ said I, ‘planted that tree, and he did it on purpose.’”

“‘Then he did a wicked act,’ says Adams.

“‘He did it,’ I said, ‘because they killed his mate. I reckon it was Providence punishing them for their sins.’”

“‘And how about Leeson?’ asks Adams. ‘Why should Providence punish him?’”

“Fergus had a word to say on that matter, but he didn’t convince Adams—you see the missionary hadn’t lost a thousand dollars—but he took us to where the tree was lying,

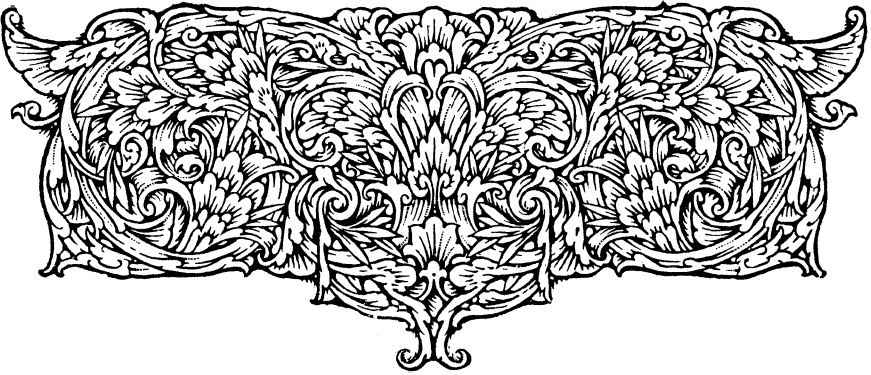
he’d cut it down himself, and grubbing about we found one of the fruit that had gone rotten and was lying bust open showing the pips. I took one and I’ve kept it ever since as a remembrance of dad and his ways.”

He took something from his pocket and handed it to me; it was a pip, rough, and nearly the size of a walnut.

A strange thing to handle, and stranger to think what Nature in her tropical mood can compress into a small space.

Dissension, War and Destruction—

And you could have put the thing in your waistcoat pocket.



THE SONG.

THE blossom breaks across the old brown trees
 (The apple trees of Devon), and I know
 White daisies make each field a cloth of snow,
 And there is music of the birds and bees.

Into this London room of mine there floats
 The scent that hovers in a Devon lane;
 The dear and magic sea is here again,
 A glowing blue that gleams with little boats.

And then I rise and through my window see
 An ocean vast and grey of roof and street,
 With some stray glint of sun that laughs to meet
 A bird that sings on one small sooty tree.

He sings of giant oaks, resplendent grown;
 Of dawns in gardens that he has not seen;
 Of nests in flower'd fields that might have been;
 Of bliss that those on happier wings have known.

In ecstasy he sings for beauty's sake,
 His tiny music lifted to the sky,
 Content to know that joys may be—while I
 Turn from my window lest my heart should break.

MARJORIE WILSON.

• A HELPING • • HAND •

By FREDERICK WATSON

ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

THERE is something rather jolly about angling if you keep it at a distance.

The great secret is not to let the trout side of it become a nuisance. It must be understood when I use the word "angling" I mean "angling," not fishing. By angling one means putting up a rod outside a charming English inn in a charming English village, upon a sunny morning, with a secluded stream bubbling within easy reach of luncheon. One emerges from the inn door without any of the drive and bustle of the fisherman, lights a cigarette, glances with quiet appreciation at one's plus fours, and puts up the rod. There is no particular stress in that. It is the salmon-fisher who, arrayed like a diver and inflamed with strong waters, erects a steel-marrowed mast, rattles on a reel with noises like a machine-gun, attaches a fly as large as a restaurant sardine and plunges, stern of visage, into the roaring torrent.

Angling is quite another matter. In its perfection it is not a sport but a pastime. Handled without weakness or vanity it returns to its devotees a serenity of mind, a gentle but increasing anticipation of luncheon and beautiful, melodious thoughts. Some there are who seek it by murmuring streams for one or other of these admitted solaces, but it is possible amongst the elect to enjoy them all.

Charles Penrose was making wonderful progress towards those lonely heights of bliss. Already—though a mere stripling of twenty-five—he could look back upon the past with a kindly smile, recalling the days when, with ridiculous vitality, he fell so low as to dig reluctant worms in an unhygienic farmyard. How well he remembered when he passed into the higher range of fly (wet) and then fly (dry). It is presumed that every child knows that whereas the wet angler casts wildly all the time all over the

shop with a wet fly and of course catches nothing, the dry angler—a technical, not prohibition, term—never makes a cast until a fish rises. If the fish appears to be truly on the feed and not merely acting in a foolish and irresponsible fashion, the dry angler unloads his paraphernalia, detaches a telescope, writes some anatomical notes on the various manner of flies upon the water, selects or makes or in some other fashion creates a fly in no way similar to anything upon the earth or under the earth, and extracting the cork from a bottle—I do hope no one will say, "I thought so!"—extracting the cork, he anoints the fly with paraffin. He is now ready. The fish, having satisfied any abnormal craving for sustenance, sinks, a disillusioned shadow, beneath a root. What matter? It is now that the true angler, in no way disconcerted, is at liberty to lay down his rod and work out with mathematical precision the exact spot, in accordance with the run of the current and the fall of the bank, where he would have been put to the fatigue of grassing him.

Charles was like that. But each of us has his little secret woe. His father, Sir Henry, was a fisherman of the most abandoned type. He spoke of "good sport" and "baskets" and "hooked him" and all manner of juvenile terms. He lacked all honesty, repose or science. He had once landed a splendid trout on a slug. To Charles the memory was unthinkable. He begged him as angler to fisherman not to stoop altogether and have it in a case. His father said no, he always thought a fish even generously upholstered cramped one's style.

During this particular visit to "The Fox and Goose," however, his father had taken to hacking about on a kind of coach-horse he had managed to hire. Charles considered

it a little ridiculous, but tolerance is an unwritten law of all anglers. Moreover, Sir Henry was very Victorian under surveillance, and had decided views upon the younger generation which were better not decanted in the public rooms.

Charles was nearly ready when his father appeared preparatorily to hacking into the wilderness.

"No use to-day," said Sir Henry heartily.

"None whatever," agreed Charles, with the imperturbable composure of the true angler.

He so timed it that they should meet at the bridge. They usually met there.

II.

BEING both of the select company of anglers, they laid down their rods and their light waterproof bags containing refreshments, the best modern poetry and cigarettes. Beside them the stream was behaving as streams do in essays, pictures and on the stage. It murmured along over crystal pebbles with deep pools and shallow ledges and long smooth lanes. The branches of cool summer trees, humming with millions



"With a distracted cry he wrapped his arms about Phyllis, who, aware that the signal had been down some time, resisted too late."

His father could think of no adequate retort. Down by the river a slim girl in a cool summer dress was carrying a rod beside the river.

"At your age," muttered his dear father, "I should not have been standing about here."

Charles had already thought her altogether delicious, but he only whistled an advanced fugue in a gentle high-brow way. His father had no armoury against that sort of thing. He merely snorted and left.

Charles slowly raised his eyes. His gaze rested on that form in blue. With surprising activity he crossed the brow of the hill.

of flies, bees, gnats and other things, shaded them in a sort of melodious sleep-haunted twilight. It was one of those spots impossible to fish which are the angler's paradise.

Charles stared thoughtfully at Phyllis Vanguard (which, being her name, is better given full publicity). She was just twenty, quite lovely, very modern, and, because everything about her was so short, looked rather less than fourteen. Charles thought her adorable. He never felt up to gigantic golfers or wiry tennis cracks or the red-necked river lot. He wilted a good deal when they broadcast their heartiness over the *pâté de foie*. He found in Phyllis Van-

guard a note of fatigue which seemed to him very restful. He would have thought it execrable taste to consider such an idea for an instant, much less utter it, but his dear father, a widower of long standing, had what he believed stupid people referred to as "a fund of high spirits." Phyllis also was glad of Charles. She would have thought it execrable taste to consider such an idea for an instant, much less utter it, but her dear mother was like so many widows of long standing, exceedingly interested in things.

They sat smoking their rare cigarettes through their long holders. But it was evident to Charles, who was rather psychic, that Phyllis was undergoing a brain-storm. He hoped—well, leave it at that. Whatever his dear father said, Charles was human. He adored Phyllis. He had adored her for a week now. In fact, ever since they had come from town for a little change. Why his father had decided to come to that particular place, Charles simply did not know. He had no small curiosities. (Some day they will refer to such persons as having no wave-lengths. Doctors will diagnose them with ease and civility and operate in the usual nursing homes at the customary fees.)

"I know something," said Phyllis.

"I was wondering what . . ."

"About mother."

Charles met her deeply humorous blue eyes.

"She knew your father ages ago. Then she was forced to marry father. He was, of course, the limit."

Charles nodded. He had heard in the way all men oblivious to everything know everything that Colonel Vanguard had not sent the nation into mourning.

"Meanwhile your father—bless him—went away to fight the Zulus or somebody and married your mother."

"I have heard she had a temper," murmured Charles. "She slipped away when I was two. I was too discreet to remember."

"So there they are . . ."

"These Victorians," sighed Charles. "What a mess they made of everything. No poise, no . . ."

He paused, perceiving that she had still more to divulge.

"I slept in the garden last night and stared at the stars."

Charles was deeply moved. He would have proposed at once, but a cow splashing ridiculously in the shadows gave him quite a start.

"I worked it all out."

"What out?"

"Them. Your father and my mother. They must be brought together again. Mother is such a dear . . ." And again that fond deeply-amused gleam came into her eyes.

"I would not go quite so far as to say the Guv'nor is a dear," said Charles slowly, "but I dare say I can see him through. He only wants management."

He thought for a long time in silence.

"I don't know whether I mentioned it," he said casually, "but my father may make me a partner. That should make me fairly well off."

"How frightful! It sounds like Surbiton. I thought you wrote articles."

"In a sense," admitted Charles, "I do. But they linger. They are apt to resonate on the mat."

"I'd rather sleep on the mat than be in a stupid, smelly office."

"Darling!" cried Charles.

"Don't be silly," said Phyllis calmly.

"Listen. What we've got to do is to make it easy for my mother and your father. Naturally they'll never dream of such a thing. They're too jolly old-fashioned. Now what I propose is this. I've written it all down. It's genuine stuff. It's a period scene. Like 'Milestones.' Here's your part. You're mother. I'm me. Ready? I start."

"Mother, I've got some tremendous news for you. Go on, Charles."

"News? Oh, dear me! Is the Vicar engaged?"

"No, Mother, but there are friends of mine coming to tea. They should be here now. You, Charles."

"How nice, dear, how very nice. And who pray are these friends? You, Phyllis?"

"Sir Henry Penrose. What is the matter, dear?—how pale you are."

"Will she pale as quickly as that?—Oh, very well—Sir Henry, did you say?"

"Yes, Sir Henry Penrose. Here he comes. That's all right, isn't it?"

Charles stared at her dubiously.

"I think," he said, "I had better work up the old man a bit. I used to be rather a corner pocket at theatricals. Quiet part, of course, but with reserve power. They were such a frightful strain I was begged to give them up."

"I suppose your father is romantic?"

"Merely sloppy."

"Mother's frightful," laughed Phyllis.

Charles recoiled a little. He was surprised to discover that he wished she would not look on what was, after all, an accepted human weakness with something little short of derision.

"I suggest," he said, "that I double-cross the Guv'nor at dinner. It is not a pleasant thing to confess, but dinner has been known to influence certain natures."

"I find mother at the lowest ebb at about nine, with lamps, and playing one of her shattering old-world tunes."

Charles decided that in that mood it was best not to propose. He thought Phyllis looked at him a little wistfully, but he rose with abruptness, and, taking his rod, suggested they started angling. As even the most advanced anglers don't walk in column of twos, they separated. About a hundred yards higher up there was a large fish feeding. It swirled to the surface, gulped down a fly with a mellifluous plop, and sent a ring smooth as oil in ever-widening circles across the placid face of the pool.

Something primitive moved Charles to ruthless retrogression. He would land that blighter, and if he shocked Phyllis, all the better. He would prove to her that life was not a bloodless side-show, but upon occasions a strong-man turn. Tying a fly he oiled it and crouched and took cover. His back was arched like an outraged cat's, his knees were bent, his head perked forward. Again the fish supped. Charles, with a preliminary cast like a coach-driver flicking a blue-bottle from the off-leader's ear, let his Olive Dun fall gently on the current. Nothing happened. He was aware that Phyllis sighed deeply beside him. Wfought to a very high pitch, he cast again. Ah! Gently—gently! Hooked! Away went the line, screaming out at a rare pace. Where was that monster heading for? The old crooked willow tree, with its roots eaten away by voles and hungry winter floods. Amongst those homely ramparts he would be secure. Charles steadied him. Gradually he swung his head up-stream. With a slow, resolute strain he gave him the butt and had him in the current, and then leaping like a good one in the bend of the pool. Slack went the line.

"He's gone!" gasped Phyllis. "Oh, Charles!"

"He's caught up," said Charles. "Look, there he is, round that dead branch!"

"Whatever can you do?"

"Nothing. If I fuss about now, he'd

break me, when he runs. You'd better wade in, my dear. I'm sorry, but there it is."

"It'll be beastly cold, Charles."

"Don't be such a funk, Phyllis."

In an outraged silence she took off her shoes and stockings and with a faint gasp entered the stream.

"He's free, Charles!"

"Then for goodness' sake get out of the way."

That was a little hard, but Charles was lost to all decency. With a pathetic and reproachful glance Phyllis dried her cold toes, just as Charles netted a pounder and laid it reverently on the bank.

"I'd be jolly proud if I were you," said Phyllis, quite evidently abashed.

The Germans have, I am sure, the only word for the onslaught of prehistoric cave stuff which suddenly gave Charles his K.O. Charles evidently felt something snap somewhere in his iron composure. With a distracted cry he wrapped his arms about Phyllis, who, aware that the signal had been down some time, resisted too late.

"Darling!" shouted Charles.

"No—no!" from the delighted Phyllis.

"It must be at once," demanded Charles.

"Must it, darling?" from Phyllis.

"I'll go and see the Vicar," crooned Charles in the manner of an Elizabethan madrigal set to a traditional refrain.

III.

SIR HENRY, having turned his hostelry screw into an empty stall at Deeping, walked with surprising composure over the empty yard and through the back quarters to the cool panelled hall. It was almost as though he knew already it was the home of Rose Vanguard. As a matter of fact, he did. To be perfectly above-board, he had been before.

"Rose!"

He was calling. His voice—that cheerful, straightforward, cold-tub affair which Charles found so disturbing—yodelled through that cool and fragrant place in the most natural and friendly fashion.

"Smoke-room," carolled back an equally volatile refrain.

Sir Henry went whistling along. He was, outside the jaundiced purview of Charles, rather attractive. Men of forty-six persist in the view (to which they are entitled, rest assured) that anything under fifty is the top notch in male ascendancy. The right stuff, in fact. Given a certain boldness of figure, a failure to do Russian kicks from the

knee-joints, and what remains? From a woman's standpoint, everything. Maturity, assurance, and frequently the bullion. To compare Charles with Henry would have been simply unkind.

charming. There was no reason why Phyllis should not grow into her dear mother's likeness some day, but the poor child, as Henry had often said, was, at her present cocoon stage, fit only for the modern young man. Astonishing, of course, and yet judged by the steady estimation of the forties she was a pity. Phyllis was shadowy and shorn,



"I was relieved. It seemed to me quite providential. At the worst he could, being a soldier, remove his poor boy."

It was much the same with Rose. She had married before she realised that the Colonel was unapproachable before dinner, and homicidal when the rousing scent of bacon was wafted under the bedroom door. Rose was about thirty-eight, and simply

whereas Rose was plump and possessed the most glorious chestnut hair. Phyllis spoke in clipped and staccato asides, while Rose talked in a voice low and haunting. Phyllis challenged—Rose accepted life.

"Darling!" said Henry, bending over her

raised face. She did not move, but sat as always in repose of mind and body.

"You are late, dear."

"Charles—that ridiculous Charles. I found him mooning outside the inn, messing about with his rod and looking like the first act of some idiotic musical comedy."

"Poor Charles."

Henry sighed, and sitting down, took, as

"To think," groaned Henry, "for what I am responsible. Nobody knows de trubble I've had—nobody knows but——"

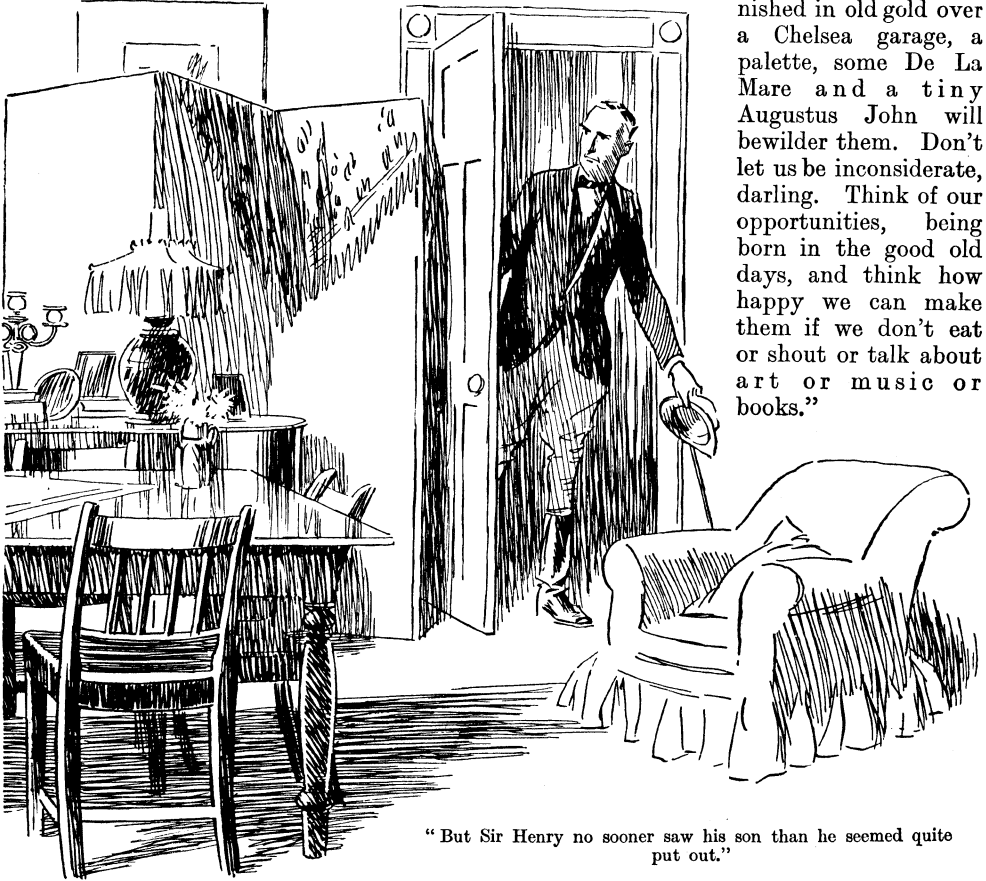
"Phyllis will shield Charles. Things are reversed now, dear."

"Yes, but what's to be done about it?"

"About what?"

"How can they find nourishment?"

"They require very little nowadays. A couple of rooms furnished in old gold over a Chelsea garage, a palette, some De La Mare and a tiny Augustus John will bewilder them. Don't let us be inconsiderate, darling. Think of our opportunities, being born in the good old days, and think how happy we can make them if we don't eat or shout or talk about art or music or books."



"But Sir Henry no sooner saw his son than he seemed quite put out."

though he had done it before, her hand in his.

"We must be patient," he said, "but the younger generation are fairly hard to stick. I saw Phyllis. She too was mooning about looking like a child of ten in search of somebody she didn't want to find."

"Wrong, Henry—quite, utterly wrong. She went out purposely to propose to Charles."

"Propose to Charles?"

"It is quite the thing now. She asked me what to do about it. She feels so frightfully unhappy about Charles. If he doesn't do something about it soon, he'll fall into a decline."

"How wonderful you are, dear Rose!"

"Only to you, sweetheart."

But even then Henry was not content.

"The fact is," he said, frowning at the fireplace, and looking extraordinarily like Mr. Aubrey Smith in just such a delicate situation, "the fact of the matter is, Rose, we must fix them up. It is a duty which our generation must shoulder. They are admirably suited. In fact, I believe, putting aside the fact that Charles is almost mentally defective, that he would make a good husband—I mean, of course, if anyone wants that model."

"I have an idea," said Rose.

"Out with it, because I must push on." He gave her a smilingly significant look.

"You'll make me blush, my dear," she said in her low caressing voice. "However, that's all the more reason for immediate action. Phyllis will make a sweet little wife—I mean, of course, to anyone who likes his meals out. My idea is that we arrange a scene where it is almost impossible for Charles not to propose. However old-fashioned, it is preferable that he should. Remember that so far they don't even dream that we have met since long ago. Dear Phyllis—she was so simple and remote when I told her of our old romance. Then I played 'Just a Song at Twilight,' because she expected me to. She was quite pale and dazed when I finished. I must say I felt rather unnerved myself."

"You are incorrigible, Rose. Do you propose that they should meet here?"

"Yes. We will be called away. We will leave a most charming little dinner. Champagne . . ."

"Charles quaffs only Hildertons' Turbulent Tangerade."

"When we return at ten o'clock they'll break the glad tidings."

"So will we, darling——"

"My dear. They'll never believe it of us."

Henry turned swiftly. With a laugh he wrapped his arms about Rose.

"Darling," he whispered. "It must be at once."

"Must it, darling?" from Rose.

"I'll go and mob the Vicar," said Henry, and departed with notes of transport like a discord set to Mr. Whiteman's band.

IV.

HERE this social record, which some day will prove so extremely precious to historians on the pre-civilised period, should end. But the following letter from the Vicar of Deeping, Whoopshire, was recently unearthed in an ancient glacial urn. Professor Snorter, who was instantly summoned by the Home Office, discovered upon its side the single word, "Gingerade," in his judgment a God of Youth and High Spirits. However that may be, the palimpsest or pamphlet or in fact letter is as follows:

MY DEAR MARGARET,

Has it not been hot? Indeed more than oppressive. You will be interested to hear that I had callers to-day. I was sit-

ting reading over my buttered toast when Nancy came in (leaving the door open so that every word could be clearly heard) and told me Mister Charles Penrose was in the hall. I could only beg her (with a meaning look) to bring him in, which she did. Now is the point. He seemed in such an excited condition that I was relieved he carried no smell of spirits. He was dressed like the modern young men in *Punch*, with a strange tattooed waistcoat without buttons or any accommodation for a watch and chain, a strange collar and tie, and those peculiar knickerbockers like Oliver Cromwell's when he said—how the words ring!—"Remove that bauble!" He refused any buttered toast, for which I was truly glad, as Nancy has no idea of the way to treat visitors and indeed is apt to smash so much when she gets flustered that I refrain if possible from ringing for her, but say with a smile, "I'm afraid this tea has stood a little!" which I find always makes people remark that they have just enjoyed a cup at home. I told Mr. Penrose that I knew (not in any gossipy sense, but simply as becomes a parish priest) that Sir Henry Penrose—a great Empire Maker—and his son were at "The Fox and Goose" for fishing, and was looking forward to the pleasure of seeing them. I must say the young man was a little abrupt. He gave a nervous laugh and said, "I want to see you in absolute privacy." The request made me more than uneasy. Apart from Nancy in the kitchen, *I was quite alone in the house*. I took a piece of buttered toast to show I was perfectly composed and was about to beg him to give me his confidence when again Nancy burst into the room and with a scared face, little short of screamed: "Sir Henry Penrose!" *I was relieved*. It seemed to me quite providential. At the worst he could, being a soldier, remove his poor boy. But Sir Henry no sooner saw his son than he seemed quite put out. They were both put out. Fortunately I kept my head. One must, of course, in public life. I simply said, "I'm afraid this tea has stood a little!" At which Sir Henry with a supreme effort commanded himself, and we all sat down. As neither spoke we all began to feel so warm I opened the window and asked if they would like to see the flowers. They both arose with alacrity, and after the flowers we saw the chickens. I was about to show them the new gooseberry plantation, when they both shook me warmly by the hand and left *in opposite directions*! I was so put out I returned to the house.

Would you believe it, Sir Henry was back in the study! Again I begged him to be seated, and I thought my eyes had played me a trick when in a very sinister fashion the door behind him opened, and who should look in and *instantly disappear* but his son, Mr. Charles Penrose. And I was simply frozen with horror when Sir Henry with an expression literally of *triumph* leant over the tea-service and whispered in my ear, "I want to be married!" I cannot tell what I replied. Words were given me. He

seemed too highly strung to notice that my teeth were chattering. He pressed my hand and left. What did I do? I was helpless with exhaustion. I said to myself, "I will close the window," when suddenly *at my ear* a voice—another voice—whispered—how my hair stood in the air—"I want to be married." It was the son.

All this is true, as I am Vicar of Deeping.

In great perturbation,

Your brother,

HORACE BLOOMER.



SPRING IN GREECE.

THE floods augmented by deep secret springs
 Swell round the willow on its sinking bank ;
 The sportive wind the catkin-garland flings
 Over the heads of rushes growing dank ;
 Wide fertile landscapes ope upon the view,
 From waving forests wreathed in twinkling green,
 To many paths lost in Arcadian meads ;
 And buds the trellis through
 Peep like nymphs' faces from their leafy screen—
 There is no path but to young joy it leads.

Rare as the orchid is the thrush's note,
 Mellowed betimes by sorrow's tender tale ;
 Choice with pearl-tints, the wind-woven white clouds float
 Above the numerous windings of the vale ;
 The lovely gentleness of spring imbues
 The outspread sky with smooth and opal dyes ;
 A soft Euboean influence is shed
 By dulcet dropping dews ;
 The melting tenderness of naiads' eyes
 Seems o'er the charmed and blissful region spread !

JOHN STUART THOMSON.

A NIAGARA IN THE HEART OF LABRADOR

By VARICK FRISSELL

INTRODUCTION BY WILFRED GRENFELL

It is not often that the vividness of the events of unusual ventures is given the public, because the venturer is seldom an expert in word-painting, and the man of great imagination is not, as a rule, one who is attracted to perform difficult and dangerous tasks. My friend, the author of this story, seems happily to combine both. I have seen him on my deck in a breeze of wind, as I have seen him in many other vicissitudes of life,—always at home; and the greatest feature of the accompanying story that commends itself to me, is that it is absolutely true in detail and is the story of a real adventure undertaken to get a moving picture of the Grand Falls. Moreover, the story of the Grand Falls has never before been told in England. For the information alone that this narrative contains, it should especially commend itself to the British public. It seems an anachronism that no Englishman should ever have set eyes on one of the most wonderful natural phenomena in the world, in the oldest British possession, and in North America the nearest one to England.—WILFRED GRENFELL.

NOT long ago I heard a series of lectures given by Dr. Wilfred Grenfell in London wherein he impressed the public once more with the great value of Labrador. By Labrador he meant the great Peninsula of 511,000 square miles bounded by Hudson and James Bay, the North Atlantic, the Straits of Belle Isle, and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. He asked for what reason people called a country the "Land of Cain" when, not to speak of the "Abel" men it produced, it was revealing vast treasures of water-power, mineral, and wood for pulp. At these lectures I had the pleasure of corroborating Dr. Grenfell's statements in regard to power by showing moving pictures of an almost unknown rival of Niagara, the Grand or McLean Falls of Labrador. Never visited by an Englishman, and seen by only a handful of white men, this lost wonder of the wilderness is a striking example of the natural wealth Labrador owns. It means that in the coming day when rails will open up the country for development and tie Quebec with some Labrador ocean-port such as Hamilton Inlet, there will be cheap electrification. It means power for mills to grind trees into pulp; it means power to extract minerals from the soil. That men are no longer blind to these facts was evident when we learned that Grand Falls had become the real bone of contention in an interesting boundary dispute, which has

recently been settled by the Privy Council in favour of Newfoundland.

Thirty years ago no one wanted to own Labrador, and that is why the boundary remained unsettled till now. But when reports of gold and iron emphasised by the thunder of Grand Falls at last filtered through the wilderness, both Newfoundland and Quebec decided that their neighbour was worth a quarrel after all. In support of their claims to the Privy Council, Newfoundland and Quebec spent £400,000 gathering evidence which, in the form of maps and old documents, was carried by taxi-cab loads to the Council Chamber.

Yet the history of all wildernesses shows that public opinion in regard to Labrador is undergoing a perfectly normal change. As Dr. Grenfell reminded his audiences, once Rome said of England: "an isle fit for barbarians." In 1763 England herself renounced all rights to Canada, for it was a "wilderness that could never be of value." Even Alaska seemed so worthless that when Seward paid Russia \$7,000,000 for it he almost ruined his political career. And so, now that mankind's opinion of Labrador has nearly completed a revolution, it is history repeating itself. I for one believe the near future will prove that the vast unopened interior will take its place alongside the contributing lands of the world.

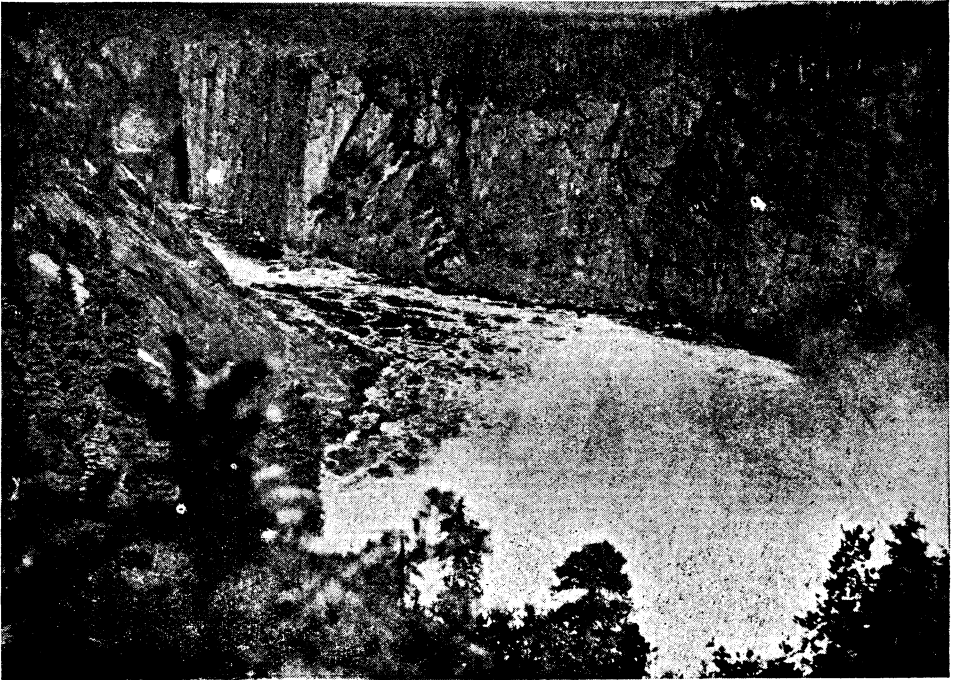
Thanks to Dr. Grenfell's kindness I have had the good fortune to contribute a very

small share toward this revolution by giving the public at least one reason to respect Labrador. Not a few who saw my moving pictures expressed astonishment that so mighty a marvel as the Grand Falls could so long have been hidden from the world's attention. Indeed, when my companions and I gazed for the first time upon this superb creation of Nature, our egos were reduced to the size of a mosquito's and we wondered at the ignorance of man who has so long styled Labrador as "God's Dump Heap."

People who have seen the resulting films sometimes gently reproach me for intended

known, for Labrador was practically unexplored except for the rough surveys made by the great Canadian geologist, A. P. Low, in 1895. Here the Indian was still sovereign. It was one of the last strongholds where he could wander freely from Gulf to Ocean, from the great Bays in the west to the Straits without stumbling over the least trace of civilisation. If youth would have its fill of romance and adventure, it seemed high time to be off into a land where man was still a stranger.

So early in July, Jim and I found ourselves at Northwest River Post, where the Hudson



BOWDOIN CAÑON, NAMED AFTER THE AMERICAN COLLEGE BY CAREY AND COLE WHO DISCOVERED IT IN 1893.

suicide because I wielded a camera rather than a paddle while shooting a treacherous rapid, and I have been perhaps justly chided for hanging out over a precipice of the Hamilton River in order to photograph the swirling waters below. I can only answer that in moments of real danger such a trifle as a camera never bothered me. But if my film fails to record the greatest thrills and moments of most severe anxiety, I can include them without danger in this narrative.

When in the spring of 1925 Jim Hellier, a young American, and I determined to find Grand Falls and a certain "unknown river" of Indian legend, the wealth of Labrador did not worry us. We were lured by the un-

Bay Company were obtaining Indian supplies of fur. The settlement is in a strategic position for it is the last outpost of civilisation and Labrador's greatest watergate to the Interior. Here the turbulent Nascaupsee meets the greater and more treacherous Hamilton to join forces in the long lake which empties into the sea at Hamilton Inlet.

I think Jim and I shared the same feeling one evening as we looked out across the vast undulating wilderness—

"Something lost behind the ranges, lost and
Waiting for you—Go!"

It was an appeal to our youth and strength to overcome the dangers of the Hamilton,

find the mighty cataract discovered by McLean, and search for the "unknown" river of Labrador.

From Quebec we had brought two Alex. Bastian canoes made to carry heavy freight. There were two balloon silk tents, arms, a gill-net, 350 lb. of flour, 100 lb. of bacon, and a score of other provisions that would keep us alive from thirty to seventy days.

With this load, and three good men of Labrador to help carry it, we began one morning the long up-stream journey to Grand Falls. Mosquitoes inoculated us with their

substitute by attaching a few partridge feathers to a tea-spoon.

We discovered that the river bottom not only stole our fishing tackle but also much of the paint and canvas from the under sides of our canoes. Jean Fornier, our third local man, announced this fact one day when he discovered himself kneeling in a puddle. The rosin had been used up, but Bob showed his resourcefulness by smearing the bottoms with lard. John sighed at seeing the lard spread on canoes when there was no more to spread on his bread. But to Jim and me the lard was no loss from this standpoint.



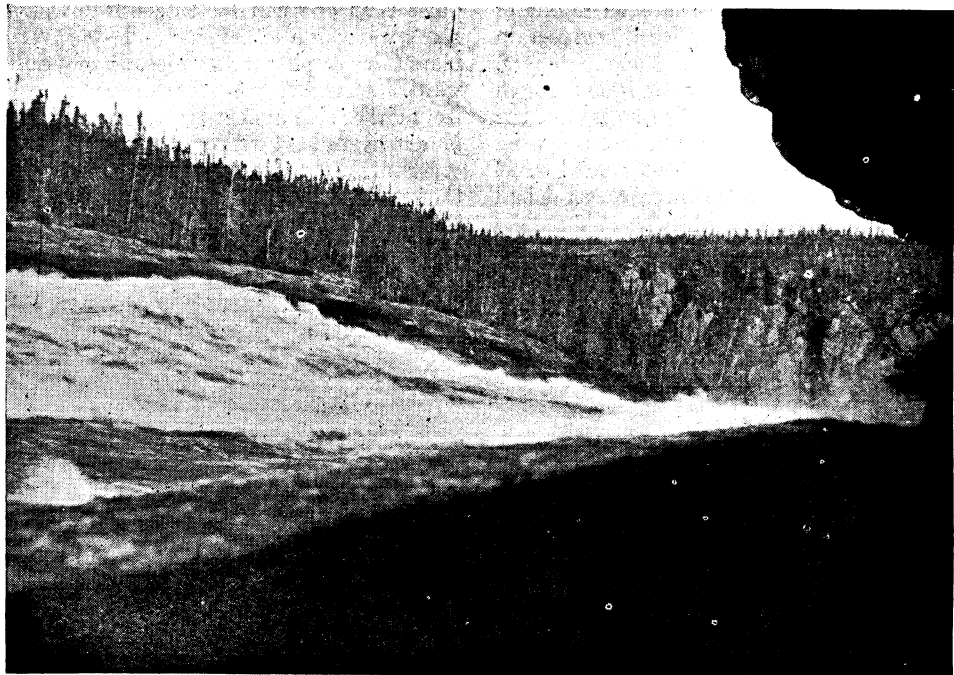
BEFORE REACHING THE "TAKE-OFF" AT GRAND FALLS, THE RIVER DESCENDS 440 FEET IN FIVE MILES.

poison, the Hamilton depressed us by its fury, and our goal passed that day from reality into a dream. Twilight came, and in my tent I heard the men grumbling. The swollen stream was five feet higher than they had ever seen it, and they were talking of giving up.

But during the next week, as our skins became more difficult to pierce, and our muscles hardened to work, and as we left the coast farther and farther behind, our spirits rose. When we trolled there was always a fat pike or a juicy trout ready to bite. But they were expensive prizes, for we paid the river bottom with all but one of our spoons. Nevertheless, Jim made a good

Day after day the Hamilton, now pent up between mountains a thousand feet high, tumbled down on us more and more angrily. It seemed determined to prevent our advance. But as we humiliated one rapid after another our confidence grew and we revelled in our superiority. A resentful river was more fun to conquer than a gentle stream, and so far the Hamilton had done no more damage than fill the big canoe three times. But our luck did not last, for there came a day when our adventure nearly ended in disaster.

In this wilderness the big canoe with its provisions was always an assuring guarantee of life. Yet in less than a moment an angry



WITH A RUSH AND A ROAR THAT DEFIES DESCRIPTION, THE MIGHTY RIVER TAKES ITS FINAL LEAP.



THE FALLS THAT ONLY A HANDFUL OF WHITE MEN HAVE SEEN.

avalanche of water had snatched it out of control and sent it spinning for almost certain destruction. Then began a desperate chase.

At the mercy of the river's broad, rough back, Bob and I were carried so fast in the remaining canoe that I could feel the wind brushing back my hair. Great sport! But I would have been even more cheerful had not a white sea of rapids, still half a mile below, warned us to be quick. If we failed to win the race the devil in the river would devour everything, ourselves not excluded.

So I grabbed the line of the drifting canoe, but Bob in the stern might as well have tried to manage a Leviathan determined to pull us to destruction. I have seen whaling dories "given the ride" by irate Moby Dicks, but never have I seen so little a Dicky as this act so dangerously. Nothing but a ride straight into the teeth of the rapids now only a hundred yards away seemed to satisfy him.

We became desperate. Brawn had been futile, brains might be more successful. Cutting our own tracking line and attaching it to the end of Dicky's, Bob and I sped toward the opposite bank before he could eat up the slack. In a moment he gave a furious tug but we were on terra firma now and he had to give in. But in revenge he turned completely over, dumping out most of our cargo.

It took two days in camp to dry out and revive our fallen spirits. A compassionate weather prophet showed pity by pouring torrents of rain on us for the first twenty-four hours. At midnight I heard Jean Fornier, who in the loss of personal equipment had suffered most severely, groaning, "Oh, Heavens! All's lost, all's lost!" But the real trouble was that he was lying in a puddle.

The next morning Bob woke up with acute indigestion and advised me that if he were running the trip he would make for the nearest hospital. The idea of a hospital in this wilderness made me laugh, "You'd be dead, Bob, before we got back to Northwest River."

That evening the river for half an hour became miraculously transformed into a great cut artery into which a flaming western sky spilt an ocean of blood. It was a good omen, and as we embarked the next morning the river sparkled in shafts of sunlight.

Sometimes the Hamilton could lose its fury, and so it had one night when we paddled up the long narrow lake which Indians call Winokapau. Here the current is so

quiet that one can look deep into the jet-black waters on either side and see inverted mountains sloping for a thousand feet downward. At the very bottom where the crests from either side almost meet, there is a dark blue lane studded with stars. But presently other fires appear,—mysterious white fans that sweep across the azure path. They are the Northern Lights. I look up into the sky and see the vast firmament of stars gradually fade as new lights chase hither and thither in ever-increasing brilliancy. Even Bob seems to be sucking his pipe less conscientiously than usual, but I must have imagined it, for when I burst out in ecstasy, "Bob, they *are* beautiful, aren't they?" he only grunts, "The prettier they gets the heavier it will blow to-morrow." It is a rebuke; he means come down to earth!

Seventeen days from Northwest River brought us to the beginning of the portage around Grand Falls and Bowdoin Cañon. This trail, first blazed by the Indians who have always feared the evil Manitu of the falls, makes an unnecessarily wide detour leading twenty-five miles across twelve lakes and as many carries to the upper waters of the Hamilton. It took five days to drag everything across. On hot, windless days when the heavily burdened tump-lines cut into our foreheads, and the canoes into our shoulders, the mosquitoes became nearly unbearable. But occasionally discomforts gave way to anticipation when above their monotonous drone came the distant boom of Grand Falls like the steady pounding of a steamer's paddle-wheels on a glassy sea.

Then looking in the direction of the sound, a lazy cloud of "smoke" over the horizon would remind us that we were nearly there.

The last lake of the portage route empties into the lake-expansion of the Upper Hamilton. One afternoon a current seemed to double our speed and Bob announced that we were again on the River. Shooting downstream the shores of the lake gradually came together and the current increased until at a bend the river dropped off to the southward in a furious rapid. Here at the beginning of one of the wildest descents in North America we set up our permanent camp. But I was so impatient to see the goal of our journey that I made John leave the others in camp and walk with me down the river-bank at once.

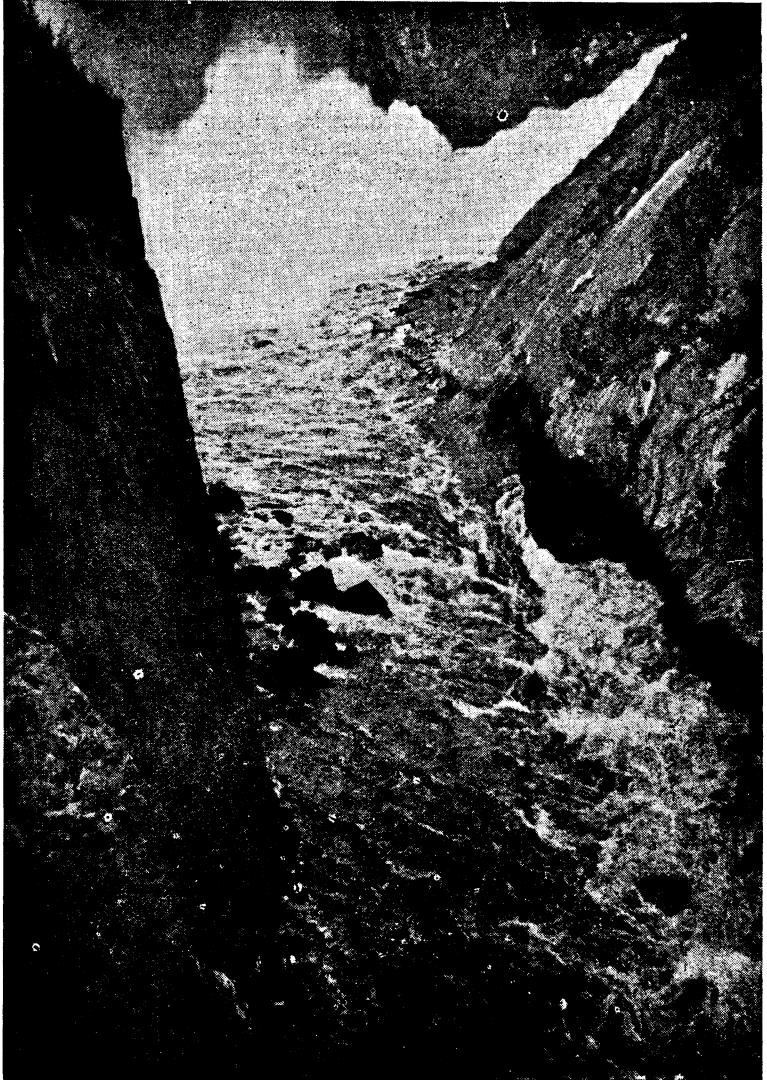
The distance is five or six miles, during which the Hamilton drops 440 feet in preparation for its final leap. Though willows often covered the banks, forcing us back

through the underbrush of the woods, it was the shortest six miles I ever walked, for I was revelling in the beauty of that wild, abandoned stream. The roar of it drowned out the thunder of the Falls, so we had no idea how far we had to go until, upon passing a bend, a high column of "smoke" suddenly appeared directly in front. At our feet waves ten feet high rushed heedlessly to the brink. A gull rode out into the furious torrent, and I remember wondering how it would enjoy such reckless sport. I shouted to John but he didn't hear. Back into the woods, and now the deep boom of the Falls dominated all other sounds, quickly guiding us to the spot where John McLean had stood eighty-eight years before. Within a yard of the "take-off," I watched the struggle of this mad river with mingling emotions of fear, wonder, and above all happiness, for in this moment I had realised one of my greatest youthful ambitions. In my journal I wrote:

"The ledge on which we stand is so near the torrent that we are often spattered by spray. But at our level the water has already begun its terrific descent, and in order to see the beginning of the drop we must look up twenty feet. There the river looks angrily down on us and would sweep us into

space were it not for the mysterious forces of nature which throw the main volume towards the opposite bank at a steep incline.

"For miles the Hamilton has gathered the speed and momentum necessary for a magnificent display. It is not a phlegmatic river



AT RIGHT ANGLES FROM THE BASIN INTO WHICH GRAND FALLS DESCENDS, THE HAMILTON RIVER DISCHARGES BETWEEN PERPENDICULAR WALLS 500 FEET HIGH. THE INDIANS NAMED THIS POINT PITSHETONAU—"IT STEAMS."

heedless of its sudden termination, but an enraged stream fully conscious of its fate. When it at last reaches the precipice it will not bend at once to gravitation but with a mighty leap will seize the air before it can be bowed. And so I feel the ground tremble at this terrific struggle of forces, and there

is good reason for my awe when I watch this resentful torrent gradually give way to gravity. Not without a roar that would silence thunder, not without a spiteful explosion of steam that would shame the simultaneous efforts of a hundred thousand boilers does this proud cataract finally give in. *Pitshetonau* (It steams). The Indians knew what they were about when they gave it this name!

"As I try to follow the course of the Falls to the bottom I think of myself as a miniature Gulliver in Brobdingnag. An insane giant is filling a cylindrical basin with boiling

John at the top of my lungs. But my words are inaudible.

"Looking diametrically across the Basin we can see a green meadow sloping down to the edge of the opposite cliffs. Apparently it is irrigated by perpetual rain, for several brooks run down along it and spill over the precipice in silvery cascades. But before these delicate curtains of lace can fall very far they are torn to shreds and lifted skywards again by currents of air from the mysterious Basin. Falling back on the meadow they evidently repeat this process indefinitely."



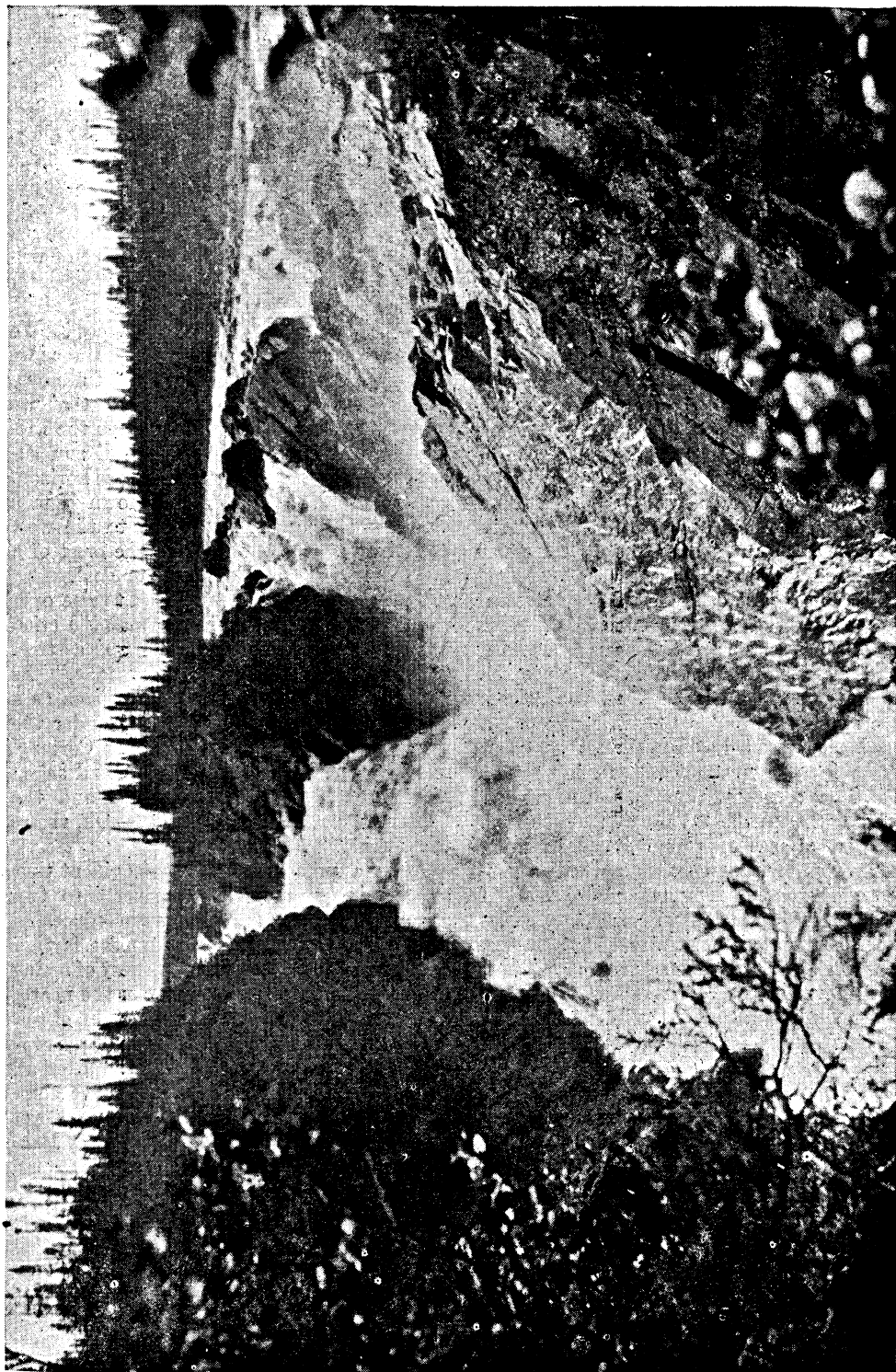
THE "UNKNOWN RIVER," WHICH WE NAMED "GRENFELL RIVER," WINDING ITS WAY THROUGH A FORGOTTEN WILDERNESS.

water and I am standing on the rim. Seething clouds of steam hide the bottom but presently a gust of air clears the atmosphere enough for me to discern a world of ever-changing shadows. Upon the sides of the basin and upon the boiling water far below they are cast by the variable vapours.

"Thus the Hamilton drops at one step 312 feet. Presently the steam is blown over the western cliffs and we can make out the further course of the river as it leaves the basin between five hundred foot perpendicular cliffs of Bowdoin Cañon. From our height it appears but a narrow ribbon of white. 'Seems to be crawling,' I shout to

Our first object had been accomplished. But the "Unknown River" and falls, the river of the Indian tradition, remained to be found.

In the little tent which we had moved to the edge of Grand Falls, Bob and I drew maps one night. In the west we sketched a lake, reputed to be so big that it took the Indians three days to walk from end to end in winter. It seemed likely that this lake (probably the one shown on maps in dotted lines and called Ossokmanuan) emptied into the "Unknown," and so if we walked southwest we must come upon it somewhere above its confluence with the Lower Hamilton.



YALE FALLS, OUR DISCOVERY ON THE "UNKNOWN RIVER," WHICH WE NAMED "GRENFELL RIVER."

At the time, Bob happened to have a blister on his toe, so it was the cheerful but more reckless John that accompanied me. "Don't suppose that we'll ever see them again," John said as we left the others in camp early next morning. "Not if we die of starvation, or fall off a cliff, or get drowned in a river; but at any rate let's plan to get back in three days." I really think that when Jim said good-bye to us he thought it was for the last time.

Even our light load seemed heavy by noon when we reached a deep river valley and gladly tumbled down the banks to the cool water below. For a moment we wondered if we could cross without building a raft, so John must have been relieved when he saw me wade safely to the farther bank holding clothes and impedimenta high over head. He had argued that since I was six and a half feet tall, I should go first as a sounding rod. When he saw the water touch my neck not even once, he bounded across with great confidence.

This indeed was a deceiving stream. From the top of the valley we might have expected a Danube; it had been as sluggish and shallow as the Thames. Yet since the explorations of A. P. Low, all the atlases have indicated this "Valley River" with a line blacker and heavier than any other stream in "New Quebec." In his report A. P. Low confessed that he had never discovered whence the "Valley River" came, so when atlases represent it as draining "Lake Ossokmanuan" they are only guessing and it was not long before John and I learned that someone will have to guess again: Our previous suspicion that current maps gave "Valley River" credit for a task it failed to do seemed confirmed by its very smallness. My guess still is that "Lake Ossokmanuan" is drained by the "Unknown."

The "Unknown"! Lucky for us that it was, for if we had known the miles that lay ahead, our cheerfulness would have been more assumed than real. But with optimism in our hearts no gully, no barrier of willows could dampen our spirits. John often laughed when he saw me forced to make a detour around two trees between which he had been skinny enough to squeeze. But I told him that I was glad not to be such a runt. But when late in the afternoon the red sun glared across a desolate burnt land of lifeless trees, I found my optimism waning.

"O for a little green, and running water," I sighed, staring back at this graveyard of

trees and stumbling on. The gods heard my prayer, for presently the ground ahead dropped and not long after a low murmur brought to us the first sweet note of the "Unknown." Far below the hot lifeless plateau, in the evening shadows of the valley, a streak of white marked the river. What a blessing to tumble into this paradise of fertility, find a bed under the foliage and sleep! A breath of air rustled the willows above. "Winikapau Shibu"—river of willows? It was a pretty name, but we later decided to call it Grenfell River.

The graveyard of fallen trees! We thought we had seen the last of it. But as we walked up-stream in quest of the "Unknown Falls," the cliffs became so steep that we were driven out of the valley on to the lifeless plateau once more. The dull sun silhouetted a grey stalk on the eastern horizon, rose to the zenith and glared down from a cloudless sky, and fell half-way to the west before we finally stumbled to the crest of a hill from which we could see our goal.

Two clouds of vapour seemed to rise over the forest ahead. "What's that?" I cried to John, who had shinned up a tree. "That?—Oh, that's a twin falls," he replied with about as little enthusiasm as a sailor calling attention to a reef under the port bow. It was as if "stout Cortez," standing on the Peaks of Darien, had asked his lieutenant, "What's that?" and the lieutenant had replied, "That?—Oh, that's the Pacific."

As we approached, it became evident that a large island divided the river into two cañons. The more distant twin concealed itself modestly behind a hill on the farther cañon and there seemed no prospect of seeing it, since a swirl of white water in the nearer cañon, protested at the mere thought of our crossing. But there was nothing to prevent our visiting the nearer sister, who after all these ages would no doubt enjoy the company of man. Running through a shower of mist which reminded me of Victoria's Rain Forest, we suddenly found ourselves on a ledge opposite the "take-off."

What a spectacle we were presented! If John was chiefly concerned with crushing mosquitoes, I made up for his lack of enthusiasm. Through this very gorge the river had roared for ages, mist had dampened the trees, and rainbows arched themselves gracefully over the dark caves of the cañon. Was it not sacrilege to intrude for the first time on this paradise of beauty? In the lifetime of our twin, what a historical moment it was

when we suddenly emerged from the forest-like creatures of another world. So when the ground actually trembled I looked apprehensively at John, wondering if the evil manitu were about to wreak his vengeance. But John looked so unmoved I had to laugh. "Looks like a ship," he shouted, pointing to

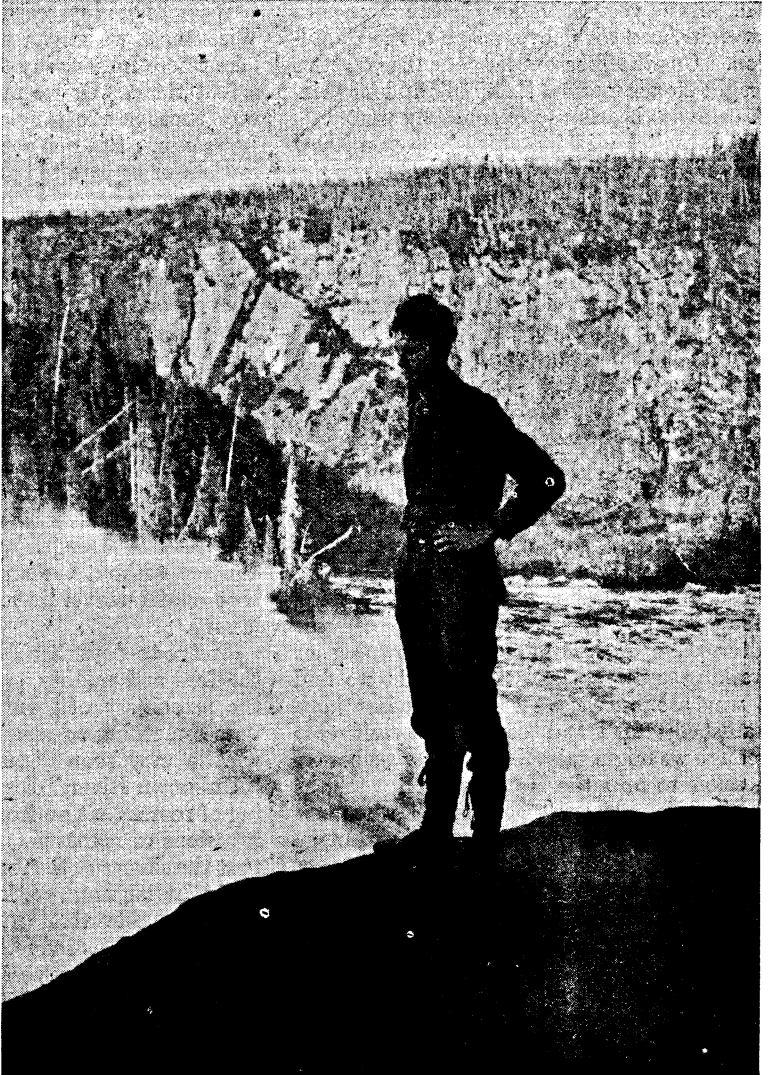
a narrow island rock which split the cataract into two channels below the "take-off." But to me the cataract suggested a huge letter Y, for just below the rock the two roaring arms of white joined forces to plunge in a single line to the bottom. And so for our twin we hit upon the horribly prosaic though appropriate name of Yale Falls.

When we finally abandoned our discovery once more to the solitude of the wilderness, visions of fresh fish, bacon, and a comfortable tent on the Hamilton lured us on long after we should have bivouacked.

So night found us stumbling through the woods looking for water and a spot to sleep. Presently I heard John splashing a few feet ahead.

"Here's a swamp," he announced with little joy. "So we boiled a kettle of euglena, paramaecii, and heaven knows what else, drank our tea, and lay down to sleep under the scrawny trees. Most of that night I spent gathering twigs to prolong our feeble fire. For a Labrador summer night it was bitter cold, but there was comfort in the

thought that the mosquitoes were as paralysed as we. Was this adventure? Was this romance? In the almost deathly silence I listened to the small noises of the wilderness; the murmur of a far-off brook, the patter of rain on a distant hillside, the screech of an owl, the rustle of an inquisitive



VARICK FRISSELL.

rabbit,—and I knew that some day I would remember this night and think it had been romance and adventure.

Eagerly I watched the east, but before a sign of light appeared John and I were again stumbling on. "A little more left, John," I said, looking at my compass by the light of a match. "Remember north-east."

I was tired watching John throw sticks at spruce partridges and miss them. But at four o'clock that morning, John made his first successful contact. Like two cannibals who had not tasted meat for a year, we ate the gizzard raw while the rest of the bird cooked. But we needed mental as much as physical strengthening, for from the next hill, all the vast Labrador plateau seemed to stretch ahead with never a sign of the Hamilton. On the horizon at our backs, two fragile clouds marked Yale Falls and its twin. A compass bearing gave south by west.

"John," I said irritably, "do you know we've been taking two steps sideways for every step ahead!"

"What do you mean?"

"We've been walking a point and a half too far to the north. Let's walk east for a change." So we followed the dull, red sun as it slowly rose over the pines.

What had become of our high spirits and optimism? To-day, any little trouble assumed the proportions of grave difficulty, and even John gave no sign of his usual good humour. Possibly he was wondering why we had not seen the "smoke" of McLean Falls from the last hill.

The next stage of our growing pessimism came when John, making a gesture that covered half the horizon, groaned, "Nothing but lakes!" We seemed faced with the alternative of swimming and drowning or walking and starving. How could we find a way around these? Even my last hope vanished, for I had consoled myself that though we might miss the camp it was hardly possible to miss the Hamilton. But just as we had found the "Unknown" when our spirits were lowest, so now were we to make a discovery. A log floated graciously across the nearest lake. "There's a current" we both shouted excitedly, for in this moment the truth had dawned on us. This was the Hamilton.

From here it was a simple matter to follow the shores of the lake-expansion. Five hours later we were sitting like Indian kings before our camp-fire, eating fresh trout and salmon. Bob and Jim served willingly, for they too were breathing freely once more.

* * * * *

* We still had provisions for thirty days. With these we might have sought a lonely lake where Indians say there is a vein of gold a foot thick. Or we might have found our way through the tangle of lakes to the St. Lawrence. But one evening our minds were settled for us by a red glow in the sky. The next morning smoke on three points of the horizon gave unmistakable evidence of forest fires. There was only one sane thing to do: make a dash for the end of the Big Hill Portage and let the swift, broad back of the Lower Hamilton carry us safely to the Coast.

As the river grew in size every day, and the rapids became rougher and so swift that you could see gravel in the bottom flying by like the ties from under an express train, and feel the wind brushing back your hair, Labrador was still to me a wilderness of romance and adventure. Here man could still pit his strength against obstacles and dangers without the annoying conveniences that make travel in civilised countries a luxury.

And so to-day when I think of Grand Falls, the free and mighty, made a slave to turn the machinery of mankind; when I think that something so material as a locomotive whistle may soon disturb the peace of the "Unknown River," I remember with a feeling of regret that no frontier is safe from the invasions of mankind. It has been decreed that the silence of the forests, the sovereignty of the Indian must go, for they yield nothing more tangible than romance, and wildernesses must be productive. And so Labrador must go the way of all wildernesses.





"'You little small thing with the big heart,' said John Blake."

THE DEPTHS IN MISS TRUSCOTT

⊙ By G. B. LANCASTER ⊙

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

"YES, isn't it stunning luck?" said Miss Truscott, frankly and girlishly.

She tapped a tiny white canvas shoe on the hot deck and smiled at the Hardcastle girls who had come down to Honolulu to see her off and who smiled frankly and girlishly back above the huge sheaves of tropical flowers—scentless carnations and lilies and Golden Shower—which Miss Truscott would toss overboard so soon as the boat was safely away. Being very neat and dainty of mind and body, Miss Truscott naturally hated litter such as flower-petals made.

"A whole week before you reach Vancouver, and he evidently doesn't know a soul aboard," said Nelly Hardcastle. "Here's hoping, my Eunice."

Miss Truscott laughed still more frankly and girlishly. She was so ultra-sensitive, as she was used to tell other friends with a wistful sigh or a faint irony as the case might be, that she naturally took her tone from those whom she was with. "Like very deep clear water reflecting everything that passes above it," she explained. "But the depths remain untouched. I often feel a little frightened when I think of what may be there, you know. A potential criminal

... a potential Jeanne d'Arc? Who knows? I dream sometimes that Someone will touch them. And then . . ." She shivered then. Or shrugged, still as the case might be.

Her depths were yet untouched, with frankness and girlishness rippling across the surface just at present. She felt it, could see it as she stood in her perfectly-cut white linens with the white panama on her shining hair and the sun on her small face—which could still stand it if she were very careful with her make-up. She bent forward, feeling the ripple up to her eyes, which really were her best points.

"Girls, what shall I do if he's quite impossible? These brilliant men who do out-of-the-way things so often are. Either so shy that they're simply Any Port in a Storm, or When in Doubt Réfrain. Or so conceited that they take the attitude of The More I see of Men the More I love Dogs."

"He won't have seen much of women for years," Coralie Hardcastle reminded her. "Hunting tropical diseases along the Equator, you know. Native women with elephantiasis and hookworm. You'll disappoint us frightfully, Eunice, if you're not the first woman in Vancouver to have him at your Evenings. All the best people who come to the Coast go to your Evenings."

"Oh, such wee lions. Such yelping little puppies," confided Miss Truscott, frankly. "Anyone so famous as Mr. Blake—"

"Call him John Blake," said Nelly. "Something so fine and stern about monosyllables, I think. He isn't John P. Blake, or J. Sylvester Blake. Just John Blake, like saying Princess Mary or Rudolph Valentino. Oh, but you're the lucky one! Think of having him all to yourself for a whole week."

"Silly! We're not the only passengers."

"The only two who count. We've seen the lists, remember. With your position and his fame. . . . Oh, what's that? Passengers ashore? Quick, Nelly. Good-bye, darling. Good-bye, and good luck. Take these . . . and the flower-ropes. Throw one end down to us. You know the way."

Embraces were very frank and girlish. Miss Truscott, her arms heaped with glowing colour, ran to the rail where flower-petal ropes were pouring over like Niagara in sunlight from the eager crowd above. Ashore a native band in scarlet struck up the latest ragtime mixed plaintively with early Victorian tunes, and as the great steamer swung

outward the flower-ropes broke slowly between the hands above and the hands below. Miss Truscott, moving along the deck to keep hers intact, came suddenly upon John Blake leaning on the rail with empty hands and hat pulled over his eyes. Borne still on the surge of girlishness and frankness she flung the ends of several lily-ropes across his wrists.

"Catch them! I've plenty, and it's bad luck to leave without a good-bye," she cried, and saw him start, go dark red, and clutch with a clumsiness that broke them all.

"Never mind. They had to break, anyway," said Miss Truscott, hovering between frankness and the shyness she met in him. "Please forgive me. It . . . it's the custom, you know, and I just felt that everyone ought to share in it."

"Forgive you?" said John Blake. He turned his lined face and nervous eyes on her hurriedly. "It was a gracious thought." He cradled the soft mass of broken ends in his palms. "Made just to be broken," he said. "Funny, isn't it? To take all that trouble and care over a thing just so that it can be spoiled."

"Ah," said Miss Truscott. She was becoming ultra-sensitive again, hoping that it would not lead to moroseness, which did not suit her mouth. "But isn't all life like that? Things just made to be spoiled? Babies, for instance?"

"Babies?" he said with a stare.

"They have to grow up into men and women."

"Oh, I see."

He considered that, still turning the petals in his hands.

"You love flowers," said Miss Truscott, becoming frank again. "So do I. See all these perfectly gorgeous darlings my friends gave me. I must run and put them in water at once."

"I hate tropical flowers," said John Blake, tossing his handful over the rail. "They have no scent and they don't last."

"Ah! You don't like pretence? So few men do, but that's because they have a better chance than we to live among the realities. I can forgive these carnations and lilies for being only lovely shams, for I know that there must be some shams in life." Having covered her retreat gracefully she felt that she might be frank again. "But after all, there's nothing like an English primrose, is there? The winy scent of them down a glade like some Bacchic toast to spring."

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"So glad," said Miss Truscott, still faint. "I—I don't remember . . . hit my head, you know."

"So sorry," said John Blake, cheerfully. "Well, I'm off to-night. Miss Slade went yesterday and we'll meet in Calgary. She's awfully keen on my kind of job. Wanted me to leave her . . . yes, and so I thought you'd like to see me before I left and give me that cheque you promised me, you know."

"Cheque? Oh, I'll send it to you."

"No trouble to take it," said John Blake, more cheerfully. "None at all. I always take 'em with me when I can, you know, and I'm loaded up with a pretty good heap of specie now. People . . . well, they're changeable. Don't blame 'em. I am, myself, in everything except my work."

"Yes," said Miss Truscott, more faintly.

She called for her writing-case and made out a cheque for a thousand dollars. Putting it into his hands, she said tremulously:

"You do remember my begging and begging you to go, don't you?"

"Miss Slade may," said John Blake, scrutinising the cheque and folding it into his wallet. "I'll ask her. She has a mar-

vellous memory, that girl. You should have heard her with the reporters."

"How thankful I am that the boat didn't go down with you and Miss Slade."

"I guessed you would be," said John Blake. "And I brought you some papers about the lectures. Thought you'd like to see 'em."

He shook her hand heartily and went out. And for a time the room was silent except for the rustle of paper as Miss Truscott read: "The noble woman who refused to save herself at the expense of the young explorer, although all but Captain Baynes had left the ship . . ." "Heart-stirring revelations of the magnificent work carried on by Mr. Blake, the young hero who gave up his seat in the last boat to Miss Eunice Truscott, daughter of . . ."

The faithful Lavvy, returning presently along the corridor to Miss Truscott's room, heard strange sounds issuing thence. Sounds like those of an enraged and hysterical rabbit which a hunting dog has nipped and tossed aside in pursuit of nobler game.

The depths in Miss Truscott were reached at last.



THE FLOWERING CHESTNUTS.

THEY say that Father Christmas comes
To earth but once a year,
When snow-clad steeples echo back
His sleigh-bells loud and clear.

Not so; for when Spring voices call,
He with a start awakes,
And, sleepy-eyed, the chestnut boughs
For Christmas trees he takes.

From crown to base he decks them all
With candles pure and white,
And leaves the sun with yellow flame
To set each one alight.

D. R. LOCK.

THE BEGGARMAN'S BANQUET

By C. M. MATHESON

ILLUSTRATED BY T. H. ROBINSON

THE mellow light of a summer's evening suffused the small white village set picturesquely in the park-like lands that surrounded the great house of Carthew. It was St. John's Eve. The village was all agog with excitement, despite the fact that hay harvest was in full swing and there had not been, this summer, so many fine days that this one, so perfect, could be readily sacrificed. On the Green the gipsies and show people had set up their merry-go-rounds and swings, and the voices of the cheap-jacks, the popping of air rifles in the shooting booths, the bang and rattle of the Try-your-strength machines and the sound of strident voices and shrill laughter rose and mingled with the blare of the organs, the showman's band and the insistent drums. The Green and the roads about it were thronged with people. Stout market women with their husbands in their Sunday best, young girls in cotton frocks and wide-brimmed hats, young men wearing in their caps some trumpery favour, a paper cockade or a little monkey jiggling on a wire or a nosegay of stiff flowers bought from the swarthy gipsy at the booth at the edge of the Green—passed and repassed, talked, giggled, squealed.

Presently on the road from Carthew there appeared a small car driven by a young woman in a white dress. A young man sat at her side. The car made its slow way through the crowd, the girl (she was little more) smilingly acknowledging the curtsies and greetings. There were, too, some remarks passed amongst the curious country folk, turning to look at her.

"There's Lady Elizabeth," said one. "At least, 'tis Lady Carthew she is now. I ain't seen her since last fair-day. She looks the same."

"A year wouldn't make much difference to her," said another.

"Perhaps not. But 'tis a year now, come Saturday, that her husband left her."

"You mind the date well," said the other.

"I do that," answered the stout dame, pleased to show off her knowledge. "My boy Jack is second footman at Carthew and he was the one that went in and saw 'em, not knowing there was a row on. There was my lady white to the lips, so he said, very tall and angry, and lashing him—her husband that is—with her tongue, and he, not knowing Jack was by, answered her. 'That's all I'm going to take from you,' he said. 'You married me for my money, as I well know. You can keep it and much good may it do you, but I'm hanged if you can keep me here along with it.'"

"He said that to her?"

"His very words. And he said, 'And now you've got an heir too,' he says, 'you've got all you want. I'm going; this is the end of it.' And she answered him hot on his words, 'You can go. I'll be glad.' And he turned on his heel and went out, never seeing Jack standing there, dumb as a stone, in the doorway."

"And he went and left her like that? The ways they have—these gentry!"

"Ah, my dear, the ways they have! He left her that very hour and he's not been seen or heard of since. And my lady's got Carthew, what she married him to save, and the money he settled on her, and the little boy. Two years old he'd be now."

"I suppose her husband left her a pretty penny?" said the other.

"You may be sure o' that. My lady sold herself, that's what I do say. She's what they call a peeress in her own right, her father being the earl and he dead now and

she his only child. He died some six months after they two were married. She's the Countess of Carthew and her husband was Mr. Geoffery Rodd. There's some difference there that money can't bridge."

"But he should have been good to her. She was his wife, lady or no."

"He was too good to her, so I've heard.

hadn't no feeling for him. Just took him because he was rich enough to save Carthew for her after the war."

"She's got a young man with her now."

"Yes. And that's another thing. They say there's many a man would marry her. There's always folks at Carthew. She enjoys herself on her husband's money. She's heard no more of him since he just walked out and vanished that Saturday after last fair-day when Jack heard the row they had together."

The two women passed on through the crowd. The little car had gone round the village, and presently returned and stopped



"Spare a copper to me, lady."

Once she'd got his money and the little boy she hadn't no further use for him. At least that's what they say. But no doubt they say a lot more than is true. 'Tis always like that and I'm not one to gossip. My boy Jack says she's good to all her servants, and they love her in the village, and all the tenants say she's fair and kind. For all we know, there was faults on both sides, but 'tis commonly said he was in love with her and she

near the booths. Its passengers alighted and the young woman and her escort began to make a royal progress, followed by a crowd of children to whom they distributed sweets and gingerbreads. The two patronised the shooting gallery and the coconut-shies. They rode on the prancing corks and horses of the merry-go-round. They talked, much at their ease, with the bashful country folk. They gave largesse to the

beggars. One of these, a man, sitting on the ground near one of the wagons, with a concertina in his hands and a black shade over his eyes, called out to the two as they came near him.

"Spare a copper to me, lady," he whined.

Lady Carthew stopped and dropped a shilling into the cap on the ground near him.

"There you are, then," she said in her light voice.

"Thank you, lady. Thank you, lady. Blessing on your pretty head."

"Are you coming to the feast to-night?" she asked him.

"Yes, lady. I'll be there. Thank you, lady."

"I don't remember seeing you before," she said. "So many come each year to the feast that one gets to know them. But I don't remember you."

"I was there last year, lady."

"Were you? Strange that I should have forgotten. I have a good memory."

"Yes, lady."

She passed on.

"Do you remember that man Oliver?" she said to her escort.

"Never seen the chap before so far as I know. But you can't expect me to remember all the savouries that come to your banquets."

"Well, you were there last time. You said you enjoyed seeing them, and you drew sketches of so many that I thought you might have noticed this one."

"Not at all. Didn't draw him, anyway. I've still got my original sketches; I brought them with me and they're in my bag. I say, look at that girl over there,—no, the gipsy kid, about thirteen I should say. I hope she'll come. I want to draw her."

"Which one? Is she pretty?"

"Pretty! You know how I hate the word. Pretty! An ugly little creature and a mere child. There—that one."

"I see her. Let's go and ask her if she is coming."

So they passed amongst the people, who smiled on them and courted their attention. There were more gipsies, show people and beggars present than is usual at so small a village—a mere hamlet, clustering below the high parklands and stately mansion of Carthew.

Every year on St. John's Eve a feast was spread at Carthew for all the "road people" who could congregate, and they came in crowds. Throughout the day they held their fair, to which the country people

flocked, and in the evening they went in a great body of gaily dressed gipsies and ragged mendicants to the mansion.

In bygone years the feast had been spread in the Banqueting Hall, but of late in a marquee in a field. On this occasion, the Banqueting Hall, so long shut up and in disrepair, was again ready to be used. Elizabeth had spent a large sum on reconstructing the older portions of her ancient house, and she had announced that this year the ceremony would be worthy of Carthew at the height of its glory.

Having toured the fair with her companion, Oliver Tangye, the artist and her friend, she drove back along the sunny road to the park gates and so to the wide old house from the high turret of which a flag floated on the lazy breeze. "Let's go and see if they have got the daïs rearranged as I told them," she said to Oliver.

They entered the house and passed from the more modern part to the old hall which had so recently been rehabilitated. Oliver looked appreciatively at the fine oak screens on the wall which made a perfect foil to the colours of the heraldic shields and emblems and to the silken banners hung at a height below the vaulted roof. The windows, of thick white glass set in tiny panes, allowed the sunlight to pass, and the golden beams lay on the long tables spread with white cloths and decorated already with branches of flowers. Heavy benches surrounded the tables. The floor was strewn with sweet rushes. At the far end, on a daïs spread with a thick carpet, a smaller table and high-backed carved chairs had been placed.

Elizabeth mounted the daïs and, after a moment, Oliver joined her. He spoke with enthusiasm of the restoration. Then he said, with a curious note in his voice, as though an unexpressed thought stirred his mind:

"Must have cost a heap to do so much, Elizabeth. It was practically tumbled down a year ago."

"I had a free hand, you see," she said. He looked at her.

"Sometimes I can't pretend to understand you," he remarked.

"Then don't try. Look here, I want to use the old silver at our table, Oliver. Do you think I might? It's rather valuable—flacons and so forth."

"Would it be safe," he asked, "with a gang of thieves on the premises?"

Elizabeth paused as though she pondered the matter. Standing in her white dress on the amber and crimson of the carpet, her

head just touched by a broad ray of sunlight, she was a beautiful and, to the artist, an inspiring figure. He surveyed her with all his ardour kindled anew. He said in a low voice, coming close to her :

"You're very lovely, Elizabeth, very lovely. Sometimes you make me mad for you."

She answered as though she had not heard his remark :

"A gang of thieves, Oliver. Yes. But, you know, I too am a thief."

"Are you ? I don't care what you are if only——"

She continued, heedless that he sought to make love to her : "You know, Oliver, all this—rebuilding—is made possible with Geoffery's money. I wish——"

"What do you wish ?" he urged.

"That I could find him."

"I don't doubt you could if you really wanted to."

"No. We have tried. We've never heard anything since that day. It is nearly a year ago now. He was very angry. I was angry too, but it was all about nothing. Just jealousy. He was jealous of me and I was jealous for Carthew. He—didn't understand our traditions. Carthew did not mean anything to him. He was different."

"Well—he's gone. A good riddance, as you said at the time, Elizabeth."

"Don't remind me that I said that. I was angry."

"You don't want to be bothered with him again."

"If he came back I don't think he would bother me. I think we should get on better. When he went away I said, as you have just reminded me, that it was a good riddance, and I gave orders for all that I had so long wanted to do to be done. I suppose, really, I ought not to have lavished money, his money, on the place. But I had been longing to rebuild, and all he wanted to do was to 'live decently' and spend money on other people. He wouldn't agree that what we did here for our tenants and cottagers was enough. He called that feudalism."

"He was a bit of a Socialist," said Oliver. "Always suspect 'em myself, especially when they wear evening clothes and dine decently."

Elizabeth continued : "Then when we had the banquet last year I thought he would be impressed. I told him I wanted the hall rebuilt and opened again especially for it, and he scoffed. He said I wanted to set the stage. He said it was not for the beggars I wanted it but for myself. For my vanity.

They'd be all right, he said, in the barn or in the marquee. Only the food mattered to them. He said there was no reason for spending money on old oak and old silver and devices and banners and pomp and state. And so we quarrelled. We said to each other all the hard things we had been longing to say. He called me a popinjay and I said he was plebeian."

Oliver laughed suddenly.

"And then he went away," continued Elizabeth. "And as soon as I found he hadn't stopped my allowance or withdrawn the settlements I did what I wanted. I was angry."

"Well," said Oliver presently, "and now you are repenting."

"Not repenting exactly. Only I'm sorry. Not sorry I've done it—but sorry we had a row, and sorry he has left me. It's so dull being left."

"And sorry he isn't here to see what a success the reconstruction is," said Oliver.

"Yes," said Elizabeth with childlike honesty, "I acknowledge that too."

"Oh, Elizabeth——" Oliver began. "If he came back, what would you do ?"

"I should be very glad to see him."

"Why ? Tell me why."

"We might do better," she said lingeringly.

"Having done what you wanted in his absence," said Oliver remorselessly. "He can come back. It's dull without him and you have for the moment no pet schemes that he can prevent."

"I've heaps of schemes," she retorted, "and if he comes he will prevent most of them. But I wouldn't mind——"

"You're satiated——"

"No. Not quite that. Oh, I'd like him to come. I'd like to see him——"

"Why think of him ? Let the plebeian go. I love you, Elizabeth. You know it. Many men love you."

"I'm tired of men," she said. "Don't worry me, Oliver. Look here, this stair leading to the daïs—there is a mark on it—they say it is where the Beggarmaid died."

"A blood-stain, eh ?" said Oliver. "Seems to have lasted well. Must have been some hundreds of years ago."

"Four hundred years. It was Charles Carthew who married her—he the head of our house and she a beggar."

"Cophetua——"

"And she stood here," said Elizabeth, going to the spot, "in her wedding dress. And there was a great feast for all the

beggars—a wedding feast, here in this hall. Those same benches and tables. And her lover, a beggar——”

“The Prince of the Beggars——” said Oliver.

Elizabeth turned and looked at him. “You are worse than Geoffery,” she said. “You at least should feel as I do—almost, but you scoff, too, at our traditions. It is history that happened here, not a ballet. Her lover, a beggar, sprang up to her here and stabbed her with a knife—we have the knife still. And every year since then the Carthews have given a feast, a banquet in remembrance of the Beggarmaid who, for an hour, was the Lady of Carthew.”

She moved down the steps from the daïs. A servant, carrying a tray, entered the hall and began to lay the tables.

“There will be a big crowd to-night,” Elizabeth said. “We have a lot of our own men on the premises—the gardeners and keepers—in case there should be any disorder. It is so long since the banquet was in the hall. Last year when it was in a marquee in the park it was easier.”

“I wouldn’t have the silver out if I were you,” said Oliver.

“Perhaps you are right,” she answered. “Anyway, it would have been only at our table.”

“Safer not.”

The two went out by the outer door which led directly to the gardens. They could hear the noise of the fair, and, looking over the low wall that divided the gardens from the park, they could see the glitter and colour of the booths and awnings and caravans.

“There will be eleven at our table on the daïs,” said Elizabeth, “all on one side; myself in the centre.”

“Enthroned,” said Oliver.

She could not mistake the note in his voice. He had scoffed, he had been cynical, yet she did not feel hurt by his attitude as she had been when Geoffery had scoffed. Oliver was simply a fool and Geoffery had angered her beyond control. He had had great effect. Elizabeth, following her thoughts and not troubling to explain herself to Oliver, said abruptly to him:

“You are merely tepid, but Geoffery scalded me. You are a shadow, but he was a man.”

“The truth is,” said Oliver shortly, “you are the same as all women—you prefer a brute. You’re in love with your memory of Geoffery’s brutality.”

“He wasn’t brutal,” she retorted. For a

while she was silent. Then she said in a very low voice, but deliberately, making a statement: “But no doubt I was in love with him.” She hesitated and then added: “That’s why I minded.”

The evening drew on in lengthening shadows. The din of the fair lessened. They were preparing—those gipsies and mendicants—for the banquet. Presently they were to be seen wending their way in a straggling procession through the park to the gate in the wall to which the young gardener at the lodge directed them. Here they were passed on to the door of the banqueting hall, and they entered, some shy and abashed, some impudent, some curious, and were seated at the long tables.

As yet the daïs was unoccupied and two young men guarded the foot of the steps which led up to it. Then there was to be heard the sound of music, increasing in volume, and there entered the band from the village, a party of young men in dark uniforms, playing a gay air on their silver instruments. They marched around the tables with a lilting swing and took up their places at the end of the hall.

Again the door was opened and the Lady Carthew entered with her guests. There was a cry “Stand up!” and the company rose to its feet as she passed in her yellow gown, like a queen with her court. She mounted the daïs and came to the front above the wealth of roses with which the railings were decorated. The band was silent. She spoke in a clear voice, a little nervously, to the people, telling them in a few words the story of the origin of the banquet. And then with a smile and a “Be seated, my friends,” she took her place in the centre of the table and the feast began.

Elizabeth, secure from conversation by the band’s heroic efforts, sat in her chair, looking down at the assembly. She had been present at too many of these banquets to be outraged by the manners of some of her guests. That many of them had no use for forks or spoons and handled a table-knife as though it were a clasp-knife, and lifted their plates to their mouths to drain the gravy, had no annoyance for her. Yet her face burned because, at her side, Oliver commented, and two of the women who sat with her said aloud that they were disgusted and others looked on with curiosity. She said presently to Oliver: “Be quiet! How dare you criticise them?”

Oliver got out his sketch-book and began to draw, and, though last year she had

encouraged this, now it annoyed her. But she would not tell Oliver of her annoyance. He would not understand.

Her eyes travelled over the faces. Many were present that she knew and who had attended the Beggarmaid's Banquet again and again. She wondered what they did during the long interval between one St. John's Eve and the next. Many, indeed the majority of them, were homeless, out-cast, sorry waifs and strays. Had they food enough? Did not they suffer in winter? Had they warmth? Had they—love?

"Animals," she said to herself. But no. She knew too many stories. They were men and women, not animals. "In every way like as we are"—only in possessions lacking. Suddenly a great thought struck her. She felt the glow and fervour as of inspiration rise in her. Her face burned with the excitement of the thought. Now—now—she must resolve now to do this thing. To tell them now that she would do it, and when winter came there would be a home for these homeless ones.

She leaned forward a little, a young and radiant figure, animated by love and compassion. Her dancing eyes sought each face. How greedy they were! How shameless in their greed! Not abashed now that they had food and drink in their bodies. At the far end some man was calling for beer. Beer had been served once, but, by her orders, it was not to be served again. The waiter would have filled the cup with some sweet and innocuous beverage but the man banged the cup on the table and demanded beer. Elizabeth watched indulgently, accustomed to such incidents. The man emptied the contents of his cup on the floor with a contemptuous gesture and again vociferated for beer. He stood up and gesticulated towards the dais. Then the fellow next him, who had until now sat hunched up in his seat, pulled him down, and a free fight ensued. With a sturdy cuff the delinquent was knocked off the bench, backwards, on to the rush-strewn floor, and a shout of derisive laughter went up from the company. To Elizabeth it seemed that the moment had come to create a distraction, and she rose, and the band, with a final chord, became silent as they had been instructed.

"My friends," said Elizabeth, "do not waste the hour of your feast in brawling. There is this little while of feasting and then—another year—ere St. John's Eve

will come again." She paused a moment. Her eyes rested on the man who had knocked down the other and who was now pulling his late adversary back to his seat. Then her voice seemed lost in her throat. She could not speak, she could only stare, and her heart beat tumultuously. After a moment she recovered herself and continued, but the fire that had been in her veins had died out, and she was cold to her project which had seemed so splendid. She said: "I have been thinking if it is in anyway possible for me to alleviate your lot, to provide for you in the winter months when, surely, life must be very difficult. And it occurred to me that I might provide a house, a hospice——"

"A doss-house." She heard Oliver's interruption. "Say a doss-house—then they'll understand it."

The interruption put her out. She could not go on. Her scheme had gone flat at once, in a moment, as soon as it had entered into her mind. She did not want to provide a doss-house. A home——

Instantaneously she knew what, really, she had wanted. Something mediæval, like the guest-house of a monastery. Something picturesque. And while these thoughts sped through her brain her eyes were fixed on that man—that man—who had tried to hide himself—who was trying to hide himself again. Then heroically, with a rush, a flung-out hand pointing at him, she demanded him to come up nearer, to stand before her. "You. Come here."

The imperious demand was not obeyed. She cried again: "You. That man who—that man there. Bring him here."

He would not be brought. He got up slowly, stepped back over the bench and moved up the hall. A tall, broad, ragged figure, unshaven, wearing a black shade over his eyes.

"You want me, lady."

"You're the man I spoke to this afternoon," she said. "I did not recognise you then, but I've seen you before."

"Yes, lady."

"Take off that shade."

He obeyed her, looking up at her out of grey-green eyes straight and piercing as the eyes of a hawk.

"What are you doing here?"

"Doing here, lady? You asked me to come."

There was silence in the hall, curiosity held the guests. There were some who had leaped to conclusions—that this was some

bad man, some robber, some criminal whom the lady had recognised.

"Dear Elizabeth," murmured one of the guests on the dais, "she is always so dramatic and so sudden."

"What are you doing here at all," Elizabeth demanded, "with these people?"

He made an orator's gesture.

"I am with my fellow-men," he said.

She was helpless momentarily. She desired to make him divulge himself. She was as one wounded who, in fanaticism, turns the knife in the wound to increase the pain. Presently she said, "You are not one of them."

"Pardon, lady. I am as they are—poor as they. Homeless as they. Hungry as they."

"You should not be."

"No, lady."

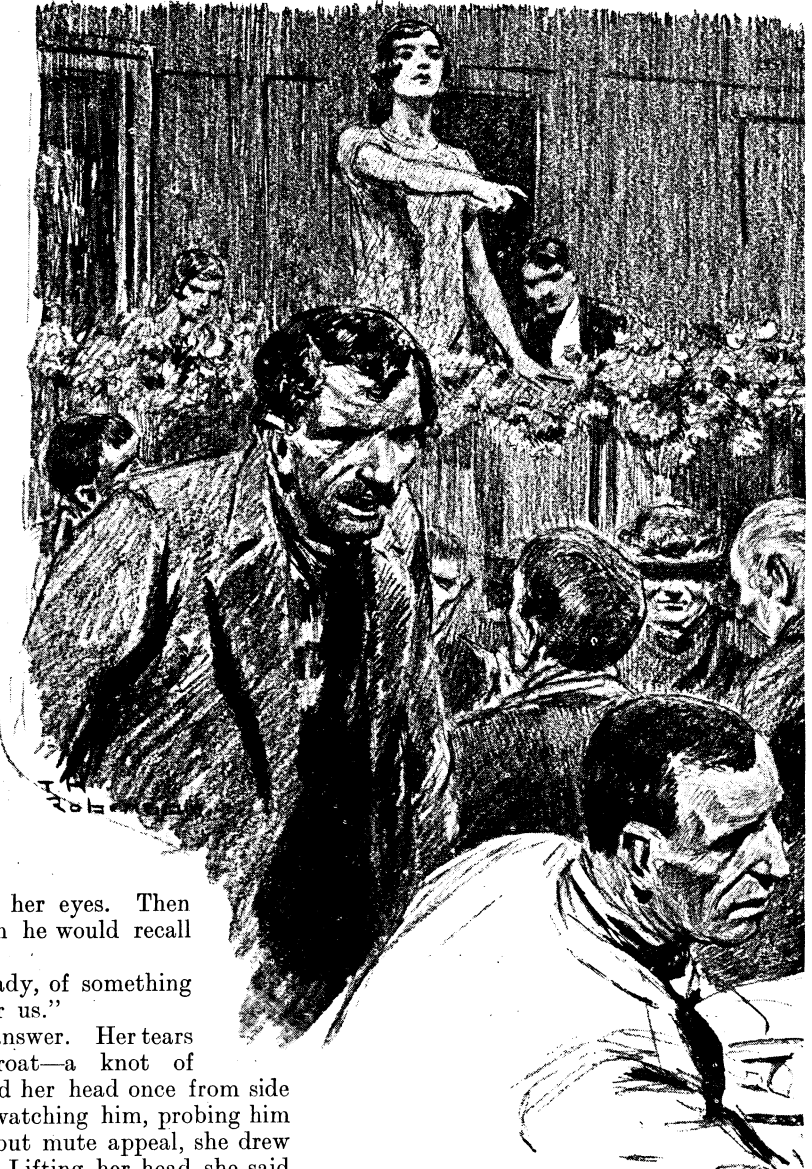
He saw the tears well up in her eyes. Then he said as though he would recall her:

"You spoke, lady, of something you would do for us."

She could not answer. Her tears were in her throat—a knot of tears. She moved her head once from side to side. Then, watching him, probing him with her earnest but mute appeal, she drew on her strength. Lifting her head she said in a clear voice, so that all might hear her:

"Listen, my friends. This man who is one of you, who stands here before me, is my husband." She heard the startled gasp from those who sat at her table, the exclamations. There was a babble of words from the hall. She saw in Geoffery's eyes admiration dawn. She continued:

"A year ago he quarrelled with me and left me. He then was rich and I was poor. He gave me his riches. To-night he has returned. He has come back as a beggar, but it is I who am the beggarmaid now."



"Then heroically, with a rush, a flung-out hand pointing at him, she demanded him to come up nearer, to stand before her. 'You. Come here.'"

She saw that Geoffery understood. Then she spoke directly to him.

"Geoffery, will you come up here, and sit here on the dais with me?"

He hesitated. His glance passed over the

shocked faces of her guests. He laughed suddenly—a loud laugh.

"No," he said, "I am not fit to come up there with you."

"Then," said she, "I will come down to you."

And leaving her place she descended from the dais, and the men of her party stood up as she went.

At the foot of the

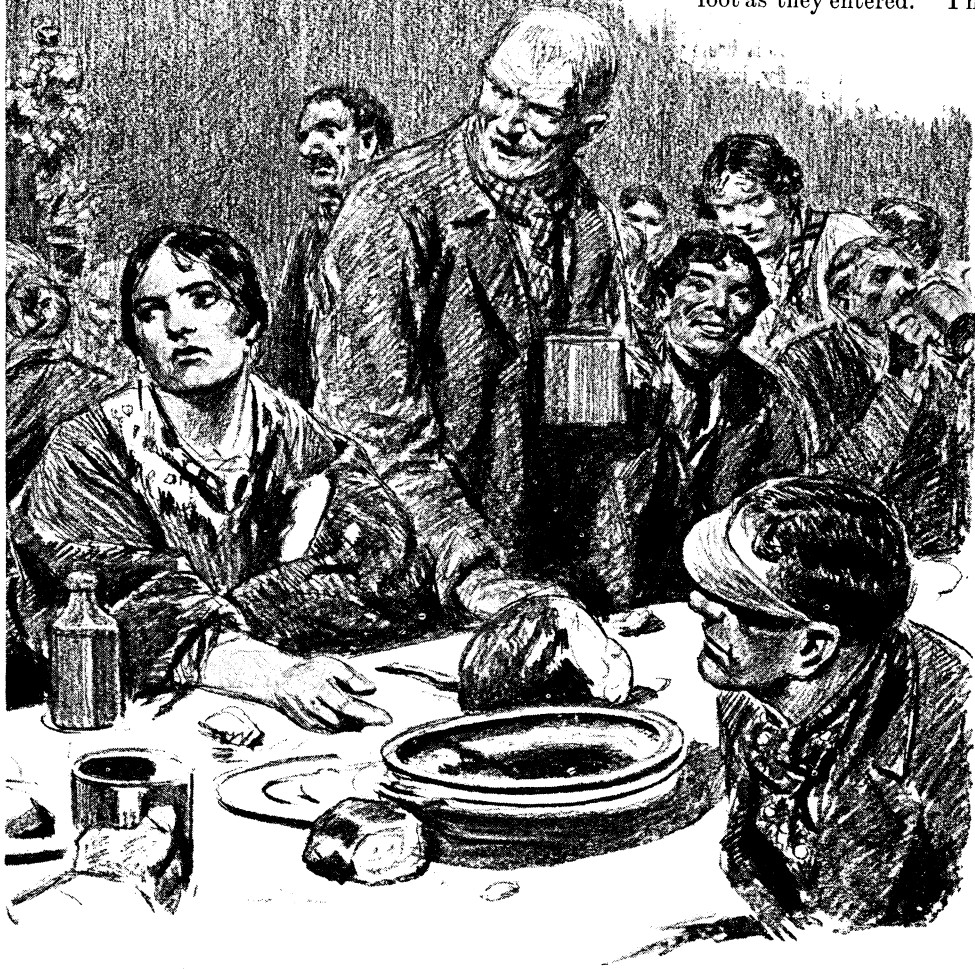
She faltered. Her fingers, small and white, were clinging to his grimy hand as though she needed support. He answered gently :

"But I have not come back. Only I desired to set eyes on you again, Elizabeth."

She whispered insistently :

"I can't—take me away, Geoffery. Take me away."

He saw her need and led her quickly, holding her hand, through the crowded hall, past the gaping faces, to privacy. He shut the door of the room with his foot as they entered. "I'm



"The imperious demand was not obeyed. She cried again: 'You. That man who—that man there. Bring him here.' He would not be brought."

steps she held out her hand to him. He took her hand.

"Are you still play-acting?" he asked her.

"No," she replied, and then very simply, "I am glad you have come back."

proud of you, Elizabeth," he said. "I came to see you once more, as I said, never expecting you would recognise me, still less that you would claim me like that. I tried you this afternoon and you didn't know me then."

"No. It was when you stood up to that man in there."

"Well, I'm proud of you," he said again. "I was sure if you did recognise me by any chance you would let it pass——"

"You had no right to think that," she said.

"Perhaps not."

"But it is like you. Never from the beginning have you believed I could be sincere. Because I——"

"The money came between us," he said. "And, as I well know, you married me for it."

"Geoffery——"

He ignored the appeal.

"And since I left it with you, you may not have spent it wisely, but you have certainly spent it well."

"Geoffery, was that true what you said—that you are poor and homeless and—hungry?"

"Quite true." He waited. Then he said: "How should I have a home where you are not or be well off without you?"

"I didn't——"

"Elizabeth, why worry about it? You told me to go. I learned long ago to obey your orders. I obeyed you just now when you told me to come and stand before you. 'I say to my servant, Come, and he cometh; do this, and he doeth it.' That's always been your attitude."

She was silent. Then she flung up her head and laughed suddenly, and lifting her hands she held them out to him.

"Geoffery," she said, "come, obey me now. Kiss me. Love me. Come back to me."

He surveyed her. Then his heart leapt. He caught her hands and dragged her up to him.

"You mean it? You want me back? Oh, Elizabeth, if that were true, how gladly I would obey you!"

"It is true."

"I can't kiss you like this. I am—look at me. You shouldn't come near——"

She laughed again, laid her bright head on his ragged breast, reached up her arms to his neck.

"Kiss me. What else matters?" she said. "Kiss me."



A FAREWELL.

LET no one weep!
 The happiest child, when ends the long full day,
 Wearied with merry play,
 Is glad to sleep.
 My day was bright;
 Of gifts most sweet each hour its record bare,
 Love, friendship rare—
 And now, good night!
 As child will take
 His plaything best beloved with him to bed
 And lay beneath his head
 Till he awake,
 So your love, Dear,
 Close to my heart within the grave I lay,
 That I, at break of day,
 May find it near!

J. M. KRAUSE.

THE GIRL WITH THE • MERINGUES •

By J. E. WHEELWRIGHT

ILLUSTRATED BY A. WALLIS MILLS

AS Raymond squeezed himself into the only remaining seat in the crowded Tube carriage, he was feeling somewhat gloomy. For he was journeying, by appointment, to discuss the sale of his beloved motor-bike. He hated to sell it—but when one is out of a job, the wind must be raised somehow. The weekly bill at his boarding-house must be met, but the thought of applying to his parents for funds was unbearable. They had thought he was safely off their hands when they had planted him on a stool in his uncle's office—and now——

The train jerked to a standstill. A girl got in. Something about the girl attracted his attention, at once. It was not that she was exactly beautiful, but interesting, and delightful, he thought. Her eyes were fixed on a collection of unwieldy parcels she was holding; he wished she would look up. Her eyelashes, he noticed, were long and dark, and there was something in the turn of her shoulders that he found extraordinarily attractive. Yes. She was coming near, and he waited eagerly to spring to his feet. She looked up. Blue eyes, dazzlingly blue, unexpectedly blue, in a face, the colouring of which was distinctly brunette. She was holding the bags very carefully. He stood up. Their eyes met.

"Take my——" he began—when the train started suddenly. Somebody pushed against her—they both tried to reach the strap, both missed it, and both fell into the seat, clutching wildly, like drowning people. She let go the paper bags, which burst asunder, and a shower of sugar meringues fell out. They both laughed helplessly; she removed herself from his clutch, with a certain amount of dignity, then laughed again. Somebody vacated a seat next to them. She collected one or

two meringues, and sank into it, pink and confused.

"I'm so sorry," she said, looking at him and smiling. He felt as if he had received an electric shock from the wonderful blue eyes.

"Not in the least," he stammered. "My fault—pleasure——"

"Have a meringue," she said, holding out a torn bag. "I must get rid of these now."

"Thanks," he said fervently, anxious to please. "I will."

She was really beautiful when she smiled. Raymond hoped that he might possibly talk to her—but dreaded a snub—she looked as if she might be able to administer one.

"There are more meringues somewhere," she said sadly. "I bought three dozen."

Raymond dived and retrieved six. Reverently removing his velour hat, he placed them in the crown thereof, and offered them to her.

"You'd better eat those two," said the girl, close to his ear, making her voice heard above the rattle of the train. "They don't look much good now."

"Sorry, but I should be sick," he answered apologetically. "What about it? I can't put on the hat, complete with meringue outfit. I say, are you awfully fond of meringues?" he asked, still holding the hat. "I mean——"

"Not particularly," said the girl. "But we are giving a small dance——"

"Topping," he said. "I wish I was coming. I'd eat up all the smashed meringues——"

The train had stopped—people had got out. He suddenly went down on all fours and retrieved some more meringues from under the seat.

When he came to the surface, she was gazing so hard at the top of his head that he rubbed it with his hand, puzzled.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

"Oh, no." She recovered. "But your hair! So wasted on a young man."

"Do you mean my marcel wave?" he said. "Yes, lots of girls say they would give a year of their lives for it. It's rather a trial to me. And that yellow is not peroxide or anything. Rather painful, isn't it?" He placed his mouth near her ear. "I say, may I tell you the story of my life?" he asked earnestly.

"No," said the girl coldly. But the corners of her mouth quivered.

"You said 'Yes,' didn't you? Well, here goes——"

"I am an actor. Sensation in the audience? Yes? No? Yesno? Well, I am. And since you mention my well-known golden marcel wave, it is this that procured me my marvellous success in 'Purple Pasts.'"

"'Purple Pasts,'" she said, eyes wide. "Really! Were you in that?"

"Well, I was. It's off now, and so am I. I'm out of a shop, in stage parlance. I'm on my uppers. Do be interested, please. I'm awfully unhappy, really, and you look so sympathetic. I'm selling my motor-bike to live."

"Well, you can get on the stage again, I suppose, if you are off." Her expression belied the brusqueness of her tone.

"H'm! The hair did it and I don't know that it will do it again. I was in the office of a perfectly good uncle, and very bored. Then I went to fill a place at rather a swagger dinner, and I sat next Miss Betty Binns, leading lady in 'Purple Pasts.'"

"She said to me, as you did, 'I like your hair.'"

"I didn't," said the girl indignantly.

"Anyhow—I sort of bubbled into my soup, and she went on to say they wanted a tall, fair young man to walk on in an evening suit. Good figure, she said they wanted. So I chucked the office and jumped at it. And for three months I have, every night and two mats. a week, ambled across the stage saying, 'Come and have an ice,' to a perfectly dumb partner. I thought it would lead to something—seems to be leading to the workhouse, as Uncle fired me for good. Nothing doing anywhere, hence the sale of Mossy, the mo-bike."

This recital, with interruptions, carried them past many stations.

"Do you really like Work?" asked the girl thoughtfully. "Real Work."

"I'm a whale at it," he replied eagerly. "Do anything. Go anywhere."

"Well, there you are," she said, handing him a folded newspaper. "I've marked an advertisement." Before he could collect his wits she had got out and left him with six broken meringues in his hat. He had passed his own station—oblivious—and was now well out in the country. He must get out at the next station, and go back.

He looked at the advertisement column in the paper. There were two advertisements marked. The first was:

"WANTED, a boot and knife boy, or handy man. Clean car, etc., windows. Apply Ranley, White House, Rosebridge."

He scowled at the advertisement. "So that is my next job, forsooth. Boot and knife boy. I don't mind cleaning the car. But that seems a snag about windows. I haven't been trained as a glazier. And don't they want the chimneys swept or gas fittings plumbed?"

Rosebridge. She had got out at Rosebridge. Was she the writer of the advertisements? What a delightful girl—her eyes had been kinder than her words; he would give anything to see her again. If only——

Then he noticed the other marked advertisement.

"WANTED, a cook. Plain. Urgent. Temporary. Good wages and outings. Apply Ranley, White House, Rosebridge."

"The plot thickens," he said to himself. "Perhaps she meant that. I can't cook, but they'd have to find out that for themselves, and one could soon learn. Anyway, I could be plain, urgent and temporary all right for a good screw."

As he moved the paper a folded sheet of notepaper fell out. Outside it were the words:

"DEAR KATHLEEN,—

"I am so glad you are coming to take on the job of cook for a bit. Otherwise our party would have been a dreadful frost."

The paper was headed "White House, Rosebridge." He did not read over the page.

"I believe this girl is going to do the urgent, temporary, plain cook job. And I am, by George, I *am* going to be the knife and boot boy. Beside her, I would clean a whole armoury of knives and any number of boots or chimneys or anything they like. Hullo, here's a station! I'll

get out and go back at once. Here, boy," he called to a passing child, as he leaped from the train, "want some meringues?" Thus getting rid of his confectionery, he crossed the line, and in half an hour was back at that pleasant residential suburb known as Rosebridge.

"Good thing I've got on my old motoring coat," he reflected. He soon found the White House, a fair-sized place, standing back from the road.

He pushed his hat at an unusual angle, pulled a lock of hair over his forehead,

"More than one day, I hope. And you look honest, but you may go off with all the family heirlooms. Not that we have any. But how about refs.—birth certificate, marriage lines, last place?"

"Age 22. Bachelor. Tell you what," he went on, "I'll go and get some kit and I'll leave some addresses, and you can ring up my boarding-house, and my Uncle's office, and the Bank—no, no, not the Bank—the Golf Club—the Mayor of Muggleford. . . ."

"That's all right," she interrupted hastily.



"They both tried to reach the strap, both missed it, and both fell into the seat, clutching wildly, like drowning people. She let go the paper bags, which burst asunder, and a shower of sugar meringues fell out."

looked as humble as possible, and rang the back-door bell.

It was opened to him by his friend, the girl of the Tube.

She opened her blue eyes, wide, in surprise. But she looked pleased.

"Er—er," he said, "I've come after the job of handy boot and knife and car boy, and so on."

"Do you mean it?" she said. "You look big and strong enough to be very useful. But what can you do?"

"I can do an honest day's work, I suppose," he said.

"Go and get your things—leave some addresses. We *must* have help."

"By the by, before I go," said the young man, "may I ask to whom I am engaged, by, with and from whom I am engaged?"

"Come in a moment," said the girl, "and I'll explain. Firstly, I am Kathleen McDermott, spinster, not of this parish—and I have recently taken a course of cooking lessons. This house belongs to Sir Henry Ranley, knight and city magnate. He is a widower with various daughters, and a rather tiresome sister who controls the household but not the daughters.

The knight—my uncle—is away, believed to be in Canada, promoting a company. The knight hates parties—so they are having one in his absence, done cheaply out of the housekeeping money. And the sister, Aunt Marge, yesterday had a few words with the cook and a few more with the knife and boot man. So they have departed together, leaving a note on the pincushion—so to speak. They begged me to fill the breach, and make some sweets for the party to-night.”

“I see,” said Raymond. “So now, you are cook, I am boot and knife boy, and according to precedent, we can run away——”

“Well, go now,” interrupted Kathleen.

“Very well,” he agreed, “I will go and get some clothes and knife-cleaning apparatus, and return anon.”

So saying, he bowed himself out elegantly, closed the door, and departed.

“What wonderful, wonderful eyes,” he said to himself happily, as he sought the station.

When Raymond returned that night, he found rather an uproar at the White House. People flitted about with floor-polish and plates of sandwiches. Doors banged. There seemed to be innumerable girls about. These, he decided quite correctly, were the Misses Ranley, all fair and somewhat alike. There seemed to be ten of them, but he supposed he had counted some twice. They all seemed too busy to notice him much.

He was given some bread and cheese in the kitchen, by a severe elderly menial with a squint, who handed him a green baize apron, and told him to “get on with it.” And he saw Kathleen, now and then, at which moments life brightened. In fact, he managed to know where she was, and remain, unobtrusively, where he could catch a glimpse of her. Then she retreated definitely into the kitchen, and he discovered an enormous pile of muddy boots in an adjacent passage.

“This is your job, my lad,” he said. “Get down to it”—and, discovering some boot-polish, tackled the job and left a neat and shining row of polished boots.

Then the person with the squint produced tray after tray of brass and silver articles to be polished and knives to be cleaned.

Conscious of duty well performed, he strolled back to the kitchen, hoping to tell Kathleen about his good deeds for the day.

Confusion worse than ever reigned. The dance was timed to begin in about an hour. Girls surged about the passages in “party” frocks. Kathleen emerged from somewhere, looking radiantly pretty in blue georgette.

“Oh—er—Cranford,” she said, “we’ve had a telegram. Three men—dancing men—broken down, miles from anywhere—can’t get here—till frightfully late——”

Raymond was looking every inch the handy man, rather dusty, with traces of boot-blackening here and there. His baize apron was by no means immaculate.

“We are now twelve girls and nine men,” said a passing Miss Ranley, forlornly.

Kathleen came up to Raymond.

“Did you bring a dress suit?” she said in an undertone.

“Yes,” he said in a hissing whisper, beaming delightedly.

“Put it on and come down. Don’t tell anybody; just walk in.”

“Right,” said Raymond. “Not a word; silent as the grave.” I am sorry to say Raymond winked.

“Come and help to polish the floor now,” she said, dignified again. “Girls—this is Cranford, the new man. Tell him what to do.” She ushered him into the uncarpeted drawing-room. Cranford polished and shuffled with the best of them—his disguise was excellent.

“There, that’s all right now,” said Kathleen, as they put away the dusters, and stood breathless in the brightly lighted room. One of them struck up a fox-trot on the piano, and soon they were all dancing. Suddenly there was a buzz and a roar of a car outside, and a loud and insistent hooting.

“There’s someone come already,” they cried. Raymond wondered what he had better do. The hooting continued. He finally decided he had better open the front door, which he accordingly did.

A little, thin, elderly man bounced in—followed by a shower of sleet—shouting:

“What is all this hideous din? What a home to come back to! Why did you take so long letting me in?”

A dead silence fell upon the group in the hall as the little man stamped his feet and threw wraps about.

“Uncle,” said Kathleen, at last. Then, without conviction, “So glad to see you.”

“Father,” said all the girls in different keys. The voices and faces distinctly registered consternation.

“Well, well, well,” shouted the little

man irritably. "I come back after an anxious, harassing six weeks, and all you can say to me is 'Father.' Come and kiss me, some of you. And turn out all those lights—wasting electricity. Young man—I don't know who you are! Take my bag; don't stand gaping there. And get me out a change of clothes. Take the things out of the car, and get me something to eat! Margaret! Where are you?"

An anxious-looking grey-haired lady came down the stairs.

"Have none of you any wits? Margaret, come down, will you, and get me some food."

"Oh, Harry!" said Aunt Marge, clasping her hands. "The girls are giving a party—they *would* do it——"

"Party," he shouted. "Have I not forbidden parties in my house? Any moment I may be ruined, and you squander money on parties. Absolutely forbid it—absolutely." He leapt up the stairs, muttering.

Cranford, at a sign from Kathleen, carried up his bag.

Raymond did not enjoy the next quarter of an hour. He had never valeted an angry parent, and hoped never to do it again. The irritable gentleman flung clothes and boots at him—finally, savagely told him he was the clumsiest lout he had ever seen, and turned him out of the room.

Raymond heard chatter and laughter and cheerful sound of revelry downstairs, but thought he would soothe his ruffled feelings by going to have a look at the car, which all this time had been left outside in the sleet, which now had turned to snow. He found her in a pitiable state, covered with snow and mud—and a punctured tyre. He also found her misfiring badly and the clutch slipping, but he got her round to the garage.

"This is my job, anyway," he thought, and he scrubbed and hosed, mended the tyre, adjusted the clutch, cleaned the sooty plug, and left the car in absolutely show condition and perfect running order.

This done, he thought he would slip in at the back door, get clean, dress, and tell Kathleen all the useful jobs he had accomplished. Kathleen was never out of his thoughts for many minutes, and it was for Kathleen he polished the car and for her he made himself ideally spruce in his well-cut dress suit, and brushed his hair till it shone, reflected in the small

square of mirror in the little bedroom allotted to the boot and knife boy.

So it was Kathleen for whom he looked. At last he found her, hovering anxiously over the supper buffet in the dining-room.

"Well, is he calmer yet?" Raymond asked, drawing near to her side, after bestowing an approving glance at the delightful nape of her neck.

She started and turned, hardly recognising him.

"Oh—you!" She looked at him for some seconds; his appearance seemed to please her.

"Well, you are nice and clean and neat," she said. "Where have you been all this time?"

"Cleaning the car, and thinking of you," he said. "I do hope you have been thinking of me." He recounted all his doings.

"Good," she said. "You've done wonders. We've shut uncle up in the smoking-room with Aunt Marge and some cold beef. I gather he is in for a Big Thing and the Ranley family is either going to sink or swim; he's rather worried. There are all sorts of things going to happen in New York, and it's millions or ruin. He's very worried."

"He seemed to be," said Raymond dryly. "Please come and sit on this nice velvet sofa in the hall and talk to me. You're tired, and so am I. Just one dance first, though."

They had the dance, finding that their steps fitted admirably. They sat and talked and the jazz music beat rhythmically in the distance. As all the couples drifted away into the refreshment room, there was silence, and Raymond began, "At last——"

Suddenly the telephone close to their ear whirled. Both started. A door near them burst open. Sir Henry Ranley dashed out and seized the receiver.

"What? What?" he shouted. "Yes! Yes! Sir Henry speaking. Yes! No! New York! Sail to-night! I can't do it. Everything depends on it? Booked berths, have you? I can't, I tell you! Two o'clock, Southampton, did you say? I tell you I can't. I've a derelict car. What? Yes? No. Very well. I'll have a devilish good try for it."

He put back the receiver with a bang.

"Here! Hi, some of you. Send me a car! Get me a taxi! I must catch the Southampton boat, 2 a.m. to-night.

Meeting in New York. My car's laid out. Just brought her up from Dover. Here, Margaret——"

firing perfectly—clutch all right too. You can start any moment."

"You—you! Who in Hades are you?"



"I—er—valeted you just now. I am—er—the boot and knife boy. Handy man, and so forth——"

"Excuse me, sir," said Raymond, rising. "The Roadbarker's all right. I've cleaned it and mended the puncture—and she's

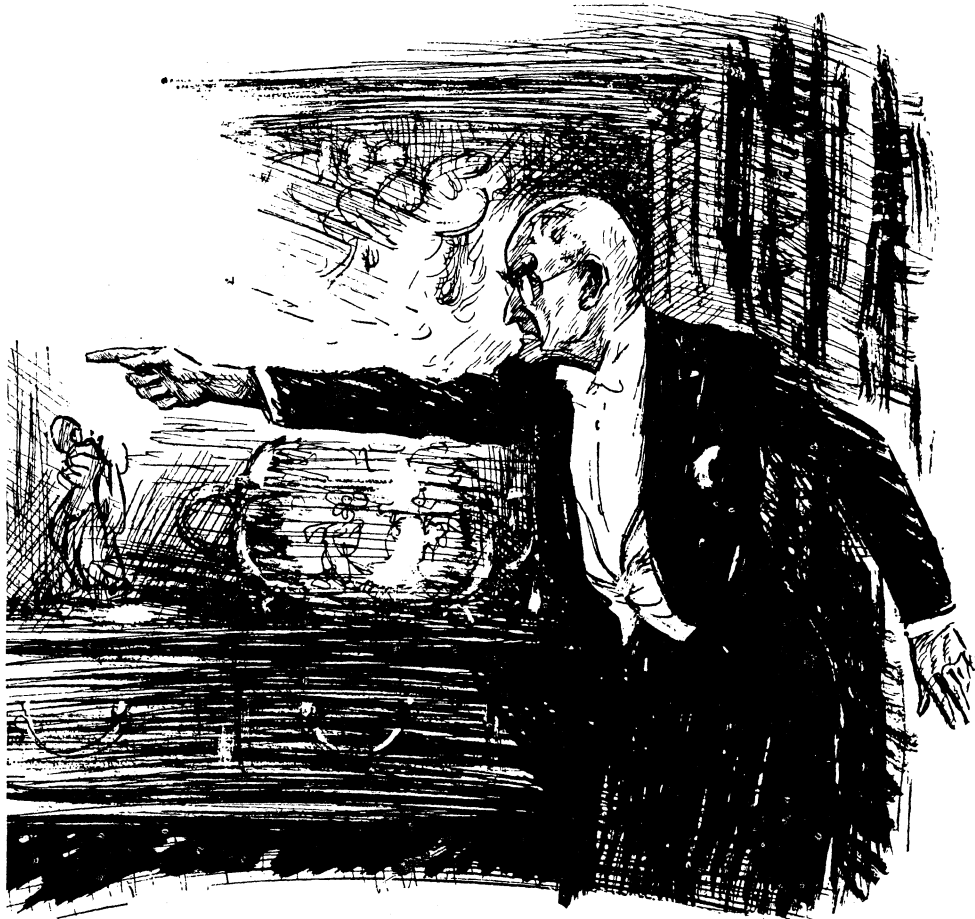
Sir Henry's eyes seemed to be dazzled. He blinked.

"I—er—valeted you just now. I am

—er—the boot and knife boy. Handy man, and so forth——”

The veins swelled in Sir Henry's temples.

A boot-black—a knife-cleaner. Change those borrowed or stolen clothes and come with me. Pack your bag. I can't leave



“The veins swelled in Sir Henry's temples. ‘And whose clothes have you stolen? Mine, I expect. Leave my niece's side at once——’”

“And whose clothes have you stolen? Mine, I expect. Leave my niece's side at once——”

“Certainly, sir,” said Raymond. “Excuse me, Miss McDermott, while I go and fetch your uncle's car.”

“Yes, go and fetch it, mountebank, while I talk to my niece. Get the car—get the car, booby. I must change and pack a bag. Heavens, what a life——”

When Raymond was back with the car, Sir Henry was sitting with his head in his hands, a bag at his feet. Kathleen had disappeared. He raised a haggard face, sprang to his feet and came to the hall door.

“Well, you've made it presentable, anyway. But you must consider yourself dismissed. Your conduct is unpardonable.

a rogue like you with a houseful of—of—Heavens, how tired I am! Can you drive a car—a ‘Roadbarker’?”

“Yes, drive any car,” said Raymond.

“Drive me to Southampton, then. Drive like the devil. Get your bag, get a coat. You're not coming back. I'll park the car there. That'll keep you safe, anyway, and I'll see what to do about you.”

In ten minutes Raymond was at the car wheel, covered by a serviceable overcoat. He did not bring a bag, as he had every intention of coming back.

They were off. The night was dark. They drove in silence, absorbed in peering into the blackness and sleet. After an hour's steady work Raymond changed down for a steep hill.

A crash. A jar. Stoppage. Raymond leaped out to investigate.

"Back axle gone," he said.

"That's done it," groaned Sir Henry. "Good Heavens——" The young man produced a map and a torch.

"What's the use of that?" said Sir Henry, frantic, and stamping, while the young man pursued his study of the map.

"If you'll sit in the car, sir, for a quarter of an hour, I think I can get everything right," he said. He was off into the darkness. In less than the specified time he was back, carrying a metal bar.

"I've got another Roadbarker axle," he said. "If you help me, sir, we can put it in here."

For an hour they worked together—oily, muddy, perspiring.

At last it was done. Sir Henry got in. Raymond wiped his hands and climbed to his seat. An anxious moment. But all was well. They were off.

Sir Henry heaved a great sigh of relief. "We'll do it," he said. "Drive like blazes."

Raymond stamped on the gas. Hedges whizzed by them.

"Young man, you are a miracle," said Sir Henry. He looked admiringly at the firm profile beside him, as they hummed through the darkness. "Now where did you produce that axle from?"

"Oh, I came up this road the other day on my motor-bike," said Raymond, "and I noticed a Roadbarker van for sale in a garage at the side of the road. Same engine as yours. So I roused them up and got the axle out of her and brought it along."

"Young man, you will arrive. A young man who notices things always does. Your habit of noticing may clear me half a million in ten days. Anyway, you shall share it."

As they saw the lights of Southampton Sir Henry pressed his arm.

"You must take the car back to the house. I think I can trust you, after all. If you want a better job, I have always room for a really intelligent man. What's your name, by the by?"

"Cranford," said Raymond. "Raymond Cranford."

"Raymond Cranford?" said Sir Henry, surprised. "There's a Raymond Cranford on my board of directors."

"My uncle—Throgmorton Street," said Raymond.

Here they had to part. Time was pressing. But Sir Henry shook Raymond's hand at parting.

"I'm your man, Sir Henry," Raymond said. "Any time. Any place. Any work—at your service——"

As Raymond took the car home, humming through the dark roads, he felt happy, but intensely fatigued and very hungry.

Arrived at the White House, he put the car away. All was quiet and dark.

"I won't disturb them," he thought, and finding a pantry window, put in some quiet work with a pen-knife—and soon found himself standing in the passage. Suddenly a blaze of light flashed in his face.

"Hands up or I fire," said a voice—a feminine voice. He recognised it at once—Kathleen!

"You're a brave little girl," he said wearily. "But you can't really hurt me with the butt end of a candlestick." He had seen the weapon she was carrying.

He gently took the torch from the hand that held it, and, holding the hand, flashed the torch over the girl's figure. She was arrestingly dressed in orange silk pyjamas and a blue opera cloak.

"Dearest—don't kill me," he said pathetically. "I'm so tired, and I've had no supper." And without another word he collapsed, fainting, on the floor.

When he recovered he was in heaven—or very near it. For his head was resting on the shoulder of the blue opera cloak. And had someone kissed him on the forehead, or was it a vision?

"You're all right now, aren't you?" she said gently. "Come to the pantry and I'll get you some brandy and cold beef. I couldn't sleep, worrying about you—and Uncle, of course," she added.

"And do I get the sack to-morrow?" he said wistfully, over the heaven-sent viands in the pantry—eaten by the wan light of the electric torch.

"Not a bit of it," she said. "A most valuable handy man."

"Am I yours for keeps?"

She smiled at him enigmatically.

"Because I want my contract sealed, please. I've eaten the beef and I shall faint again if you don't. Then you'll have to rouse the house."

"Please just say we are both engaged to each other."

"Seal it."

She sealed it. And as the torch with its bearer flitted away from him up the stairs, he reflected that he really had done a good and honest day's work in his new job.

MR. DUMPHRY, MR. MATCHEM, AND MRS. TRESSER'S DOG

By BARRY PAIN

ILLUSTRATED BY WILL LONDON

"I THINK," said Mr. Dumphy, laying aside his newspaper, "that one of the most disgraceful things in our civilisation is the way in which money is collected for charity. There's a case here in which at a bazaar a lottery was held. Lotteries are illegal. The police took the matter up and I see that the people got off with a small fine. There was even an expression of regret that it was necessary to convict at all. There was actually a bishop on the committee of the bazaar. I want to know what we're coming to. If I'd run a similar lottery on my own account I should have been made to pay a long price for it. It looks as if there was one law for the good and another for the bad."

"Generally is," said Queenie.

"Try to break yourself," said Mrs. Dumphy, "of that habit of interrupting your father when he's talking."

"But that's not all," resumed Mr. Dumphy. "There are many lotteries which are just enough disguised to escape the law. You are given, say, the names of twenty-four different cough remedies and have to place the first twelve in the order of their popularity. First prize £1,000 motor-car, second prize £500 in cash, and so forth and so on. The whole thing's a swindle to my mind. Nobody can possibly place the first twelve in their order of popularity by any effort of skill. You might just as well toss a penny for the prize. And then again, where does the money for the prizes come from? It comes

from the entries. That is to say, it has to be deducted from the charity. It is like a cynical declaration that nobody will give anything for a good cause unless they have a chance to make something out of it for themselves on the way. I'm sick of it."

"But I don't see how you're going to alter it," said Mrs. Dumphy, "because human nature being what it is, it's almost certain to be like that, isn't it?"

"Possibly. But one of these days I shall do something about it. No business could possibly be conducted in the way in which charities conduct their business. I'm by no means certain that I should not begin by prohibiting bazaars altogether."

"Don't do it just yet, dad," said Queenie. "You see, the bazaar at St. Andrew's starts on Thursday, and I've promised to sell. So's Eileen and a whole lot of others."

"Well," said Mr. Dumphy indulgently, "I think I might go so far as to promise not to get all bazaars prohibited before Thursday. At the same time it's a subject I've thought a good deal about and I'm quite certain that the general methods of charity will have to be tackled in the near future."

After the following Thursday Queenie, who had worn a perfectly new dress, returned late in the evening, weary but joyous.

"I sold buttonholes," she replied in response to inquiries. "Eileen and Amy Meek and I each were given a tray of thirty buttonholes. We were to sell them at a

shilling apiece or as much more as we could get. At the end of the show we compared figures to see which of us had got in most."

"And I expect you won," said her father.

"No, I didn't. I only made an average of one-and-fourpence a buttonhole. Eileen won easily. She got three pounds for her lot. She'd hit on a very good stunt. I only wish I'd thought of it myself."

"And what was the stunt?" asked her father.

"Well, you see, we didn't tackle the young men much. They've got no money, poor dears. They make as much splash as they can for eighteenpence and then they clear out. For the buttonhole game old gentlemen are several times the best market. Eileen's stunt was this. She'd catch an old gentleman and say: 'Only one shilling for this beautiful buttonhole. Five shillings if I kiss it before I sell it to you.' And they fell into it. Shoals of them fell into it. Some of them offered her a guinea if she'd kiss them instead of the flower. But there of course there was nothing doing. Anyhow, she did jolly well and I'm only sorry I didn't think of it myself. Poor Amy Meek was last of the three. She'd only got threepence over the thirty shillings. Got as nice a nature as anybody I know, but of course she's not exactly what you'd call pretty."

"I cannot say I approve of it," said Mrs. Dumphy. "I'm surprised that Eileen should have been so forward. There is a flirtatiousness about it of which I disapprove utterly. Nothing of the kind could have happened in my young days."

And certainly it was a little difficult at the moment to imagine that Mrs. Dumphy could ever have been guilty of such light conduct.

"And I also disapprove," said Mr. Dumphy. "Eileen is as nice a girl as I know, and yet in the cause of charity she deliberately uses sex-attraction in order to make money. Mind you, she's not to blame. It happens often. You see the same thing every flag-day. Young women and pretty girls sell the flowers. I suppose if the sales were entrusted entirely to fat old gentlemen the results would drop by about fifty per cent. And it's a disgrace to us, it's a perfect disgrace."

"Of course," said Mrs. Dumphy. "We do have to have these flag-days, don't we?"

"And why do we?" said Mr. Dumphy.

"Can't I be trusted to subscribe what I can afford to any good cause which I approve without having to buy an artificial flower?"

"It's this way," said Queenie. "If you put the flower in your coat, then that shows you've paid and you don't get troubled any more."

"It brings it all down to a very low level," said Mr. Dumphy. "I may wish to contribute to a certain charity but I don't wish to brag that I have done so. The wearing of the flower or flag is practically bragging. And that is repugnant to me."

"Still," said Queenie, "every flag-day you always get one, you know, dad."

Mr. Dumphy stroked his chin reflectively.

"M'yes," he said. "That is in a sense true. Matter of fact, I generally do as you say. But it is quite recently that I have brought my mind to bear on the subject. I have done as others did. And I can assure you that now I have brought my mind to bear upon it, I see that from the point of view of strict business this flag collection is quite insufficiently guarded."

"Then again," said Queenie, "I'm a bit fed up of all this jaw about sex-attraction."

"That," said Mrs. Dumphy, "might have been more elegantly expressed."

"Yes, mummie, I see. Sorry. What I mean to say is that as often as not sex-attraction don't come in at all. Any woman even would be more likely to buy a flag from a charming girl than from an old gentleman with too much waistcoat. And the strictest business seems to know it. If it wants to sell its vacuum-cleaners from door to door, it employs people who know all about it, but the preference goes to people of attractive manners and appearance. Because, of course, that sort are already half-way there, whereas the others would have to go the whole distance."

"There may be something in what you say," Mr. Dumphy admitted. "In fact, I believe there is. Still, the divergence between the methods of charity and those of business is far too wide. I must give it my serious consideration."

"And then what are you going to do about it?" asked Queenie.

"That perhaps it is rather too early to say. It is only recently that I could be said to have given my mind to the subject at all. There are many considerations which have to be taken into account. For instance, I should not wish to run counter to the Charity Organisation, or that my efforts should in

any way overlap theirs. It would be better, no doubt, if the organisation had more money to spend on publicity, and its excellent work were better known. Still, it does seem to me that it is a pressing subject. Consider too—just consider—the system of collecting by envelopes. A printed envelope is left at your house one day, and you are asked to put in your contribution to the charity indicated, and to hand it over to a collector who will call on the following day. From the business point of view this is open to the gravest objections. Quite possibly we do not give to collections of the kind. By the way, do we?”

“Almost always,” said Mrs. Dumphy complacently. “Such very good causes. Of course, one can’t give to everything, but one can put threepence into an envelope when one would hesitate to offer the actual coppers. Generally, I know the collector myself, or at any rate I know who she is and all about her.”

“Certainly,” said Mr. Dumphy. “Quite so. That is all right. You are assured of the bona fides of the collector. But many people are not so assured. Don’t misunderstand me. I’m not attacking charities—on the contrary, I think I support them as far as I can every year of my life. But I am attacking the dirty dogs who exploit the charities for their own ends. And what I ask the charities to do is to take such proper business precautions as to make this exploitation impossible.”

“Seems fair enough,” said the judicial Queenie. “But how? I mean, what are you going to do?”

“Well, that is too early to decide absolutely. But it is quite possible that I may devote my spare time during the next few days to the composition of a letter on the subject suitable for appearance in *The Times* newspaper.”

“Why not?” asked Queenie.

“Well, there seems to be no great certainty about it. Of course, *The Times* might give my letter a column length and also have a leader on the subject. At the same time it might not. You never know, you see. I might think of something better.”

On the following day there was a local flag-day. Mr. Dumphy purchased a penny flag for one shilling from quite a pretty girl. Mrs. Dumphy slipped half a crown into an envelope which had been pushed into the letter-box for subsequent collection. Queenie Dumphy bestowed two-

pence of her fortune on a blind beggar in the street. In fact, the Dumphy practice had not yet soared to the level of the Dumphy preaching.

On his return home on Friday evening Mr. Dumphy had news to communicate.

“You remember,” he said, “that a few days ago I had something to say on the marked contrast between charity methods and business methods. It is quite possible that I may have to undertake rather an important work in connection with this.”

“How do you mean?” asked Queenie.

“Well, this afternoon I was having a talk with the head of a large publishing firm with which we do business. As it happened, I was led to talk on the subject of charities, and I said to him very much what I’ve said to you.

“‘You ought to do a book on this, Dumphy,’ he said to me. ‘Your ideas seem to me very sound. You might call it ‘Charity and Business.’ Needn’t be such a very long book. ‘Course you’d have to collect your material and have your authorities for any statement you made. It’s just the sort of book that I think my firm would like to publish.’”

“Ooh!” said Queenie. “How much money are they going to give you for it?”

“Well, well,” said Mr. Dumphy, “we didn’t quite reach that point. In fact, it is by no means certain that the firm would take my book. Still, there seems to be a very fair chance, and it’s quite likely the work would interest me.”

“You must do it, dad,” said Queenie.

“I quite agree,” said Mrs. Dumphy. “If it is to be done at all, nobody could do it better. Far too many authors seem to me to be wasting their time on trashy fiction at present without the slightest idea of being of any real use in the world.”

“I shall certainly think it over,” said Mr. Dumphy. “It is work which might interest me very much. At the same time, if I do it we must put our own house in order first. Nobody must be able to reproach me with my own practice. There must be no more wearing of flags for me, no more putting money into envelopes left at the door. And of course, I need hardly say, nothing must be given to any street beggar. Perhaps it is not necessary to mention that last. The statistics on the subject are quite definite.”

Queenie looked up at the ceiling and said nothing.

“Bazaars and any lotteries,” continued

Mr. Dumphry, "would be absolutely taboo. We should continue to give to charities, but we should send our offerings direct to the charities and receive proper official receipts. That is really the only common-sense way

to come to a decision. As he thought it over, he could see things in favour of his authorship, but he could also see things which to his mind were unfavourable. The work that would have to be done seemed to increase



"'Come, come,' said Mr. Dumphry, 'you mustn't talk like that. Let me see now.' He rose, and thrust his hand into the pocket in which he kept his silver."

to do it, and that is the way in which it must be done in my household if I decide to undertake this book."

There was no immediate pressure on him

as he looked more closely into it. It might even encroach on his legitimate business, and that was not a thing that Mr. Dumphry would contemplate for one moment.

On Saturday morning Mr. Dumphy proceeded for exercise and meditation along the walk beside the river. It was a broad gravel walk and on one side of it was a stretch of green turf on which iron seats were disposed. They were intended for the benefit of citizens of the neighbourhood, and in the summer were mostly occupied by tramps. As Mr. Dumphy turned off from the main road on to the walk he saw on the nearest

far as I know—nobody's ever used a harsh word to him. He's a good dog, Tim is, and the friend of the whole world. Ain't you, Tim?"

Tim's tail acknowledged the compliment. "He looks in better condition than you do," said Mr. Dumphy.

"May be," said the old man. "Many a day he's had a full meal when I've gone hungry. Let's hope things will be better when I get back to work again."

"And what work do you do?"

"I'm a gardener, when I'm up to it, and I think I may say that I knows the work. At the best job I ever had, I'd ten men working under me. But my health give way, and I've come down to the jobbing now. I hope to be ready for work again on Monday. I suppose you ain't got a little work, sir, as you could put in my way?"

"I already have a gardener. I might be able to hear of something for you."

"And very kind of you. It's this dog-licence that breaks my heart. I wish there was no such thing."

"You've not got a licence?"

"No, sir. I can't honestly say that I have. It ain't my fault. When a poor man's on his back for a fortnight, that eats up all his little savings. And you know how the law is. If you've got no licence, you can't have no dog—not if he's the only friend you've got on earth."

"You mean, you'll have to sell Tim."

"I could never do that, sir. I couldn't and I wouldn't. Some unexpected help may come my way. And if all's hopeless, there's always one way out for a dog—aye, and

for a man too."

"Come, come," said Mr. Dumphy, "you mustn't talk like that. Let me see now."

He rose, and thrust his hand into the pocket in which he kept his silver.

And at the same moment a policeman stepped out from the trees behind the seat. Mr. Dumphy and that policeman had frequently interchanged passing salutations.

"Half a moment, sir," said the policeman. "I shouldn't give that man nothing."

"That you, Mr. Jickle?" asked the old man bitterly. "And has you no better manners than to come bullocking in, when



"And at the same moment a policeman stepped out from the trees behind the seat."

sat a small and withered old man in clothes which were very shabby but not ragged. A comfortable-looking fox-terrier was asleep at the man's feet and the man held the end of the dog's lead between his brownish-yellow fingers. The man rather interested Mr. Dumphy. He went the length of the walk and returned, and this time sat down on the seat beside him. The dog woke up and showed himself of a friendly disposition.

"Yes," said the old man as Mr. Dumphy patted the dog's head, "he's kind with strangers, is Tim. Thinks no harm of anybody. Reckon it's the way he was brought up. Nobody's ever struck him, and—so

two gentlemen are having a private conversation?"

"Less of it," said Mr. Jickle wearily. "And don't you move neither. This time I might want you to come a little walk along of me."

"Move? Why should I move? I done no wrong and said no wrong. Besides, I'm expecting a lady-friend here any minute now."

"Did this man beg from you, Mr. Dumphry?"

"Well, no," said Mr. Dumphry. "I can't say he did. He asked for work."

"There you are," said the old man. "The gentleman's give you your answer. And now perhaps you'll hop it before you make any more bloomers."

"You hold your jaw," said Jickle.

"I was about to give him something," added Mr. Dumphry, "because he seemed in such distress about getting a licence for this dog of his."

"That's the limit. That's not his dog. He's only minding it for Mrs. Tresser, who's stepped across into the library—there's her name on the collar."

"Don't get excited," said the old man. "It's not my dog, and I never said it was."

"You certainly let me suppose so," said Mr. Dumphry gravely.

The old man shook his head. "Do you remember me telling you I wouldn't sell the dog?"

"You said so, but——"

"Well, the only reason I could have for not selling it was that it weren't mine to sell. Stands to reason. Just look at the beggar—an overfed, soft-hearted bag of tripe like that. No man in his senses would own him. Kind of dog that would kiss a policeman, he is."

And at this moment Mrs. Tresser, a smiling middle-aged lady, appeared on the scene. The old man stood upright, touched his cap most respectfully, and handed her the dog's lead. The dog also rose and yawned.

"And how's little doggie been behaving?" asked Mrs. Tresser in a voice that was both bright and syrupy.

"Like a perfect gentleman, same as he always does," said the old man with conviction. "Thank you very much," he added, as he pocketed the proffered sixpence. "It's very kind of you, ma'am. And I hope and pray you may never want a sixpence as bad as I wanted that one. Thank you, lady."

He again touched his cap, and watched the lady and dog move off. Then he turned once more to his enemy.

"And now, Mr. Jickle," he said, "if you has no further remarks to offer, I'll be getting on to have my little drop of dinner. You've made me late for it, as it is."

"Coming back to it," said the policeman stolidly, "coming back to it, if you hadn't got a dog, why did you tell this gentleman you wanted a licence?"

"Because I did. I'll try to put it in simple language so as you can understand it. I has a chance of buying through a friend of mine a real good 'un very cheap. He's a fox-terrier, well-bred and very nippy. Perhaps he's a bit too much on the sharp side. At any rate, my friend had to decide whether he'd keep his family or keep the dog. Rightly or wrongly, he decided to keep the family. Then there was trouble from people who'd made the mistake of walking past his house, and quite likely he'd get an order to destroy. So he said he'd let me have the dog at my own risk for a shilling. The shilling I could do, but I couldn't go further. So I said I'd take the dog if I could raise the money for the licence. My friend had no licence, but a subject of police persecution, same as myself, has to be careful. Give me the licence and I'll get the dog. That's all there is to it."

"Clear out," said the despondent policeman, "and don't you come hanging about Riverside Walk too much or I may take you yet. I'm not sure as I oughtn't to take you now."

"Thank you for your kind words," said the old man as he headed in the direction of the nearest public-house.

"Curious character," declared Mr. Dumphry.

"He's a bit too much for me, sir," said the policeman. "He's a bit too much for all of us. We've got him convicted seven or eight times but more often than not he's managed to get off. I shouldn't call him clever, neither—slippery, but not clever. And he's got the gift of the gab, as you might say."

"What's his work?" asked Mr. Dumphry. "He told me he was a gardener."

"The last job I knowed him to apply for was to tie salmon flies for a private gentleman. He's never seen a salmon except outside the fishmongers' and he's never seen a fly except a house-fly. He makes his living mostly by cadging. His name's 'Erbit

Matchem and his wife's a respectable woman—does the high-class laundry work and could be comfortable enough but for what he pinches off of her. You see, it ain't too easy to get him. I've never heard him use a word of bad language as long as I've known him, nor nobody else neither. I've never seen him drunk in my life. Mind you, he'll put away enough to wash a tram-car, but he can walk straight and talk straight at the end of it—some kind of a disease I should think. He's often hanging round the police-court and he's got to know a bit more than most about the law. As for work, I've never known him do a day's work in his life, and I don't suppose he ever will. Lots of better men than he is have been hung before this."

"This is a sad account you give me of him," said Mr. Dumphy, "a very sad account."

"Well, sir, if you'll excuse me for saying so," said Jickle, "you're just a little too kind-hearted, and it's the same with Mrs. Tresser, and it's the same with others. They gives a man like 'Erbit his chance. If you read what the Charity Organisation has to say about these cadgers——"

"I know, I know," said Mr. Dumphy. "It's very seldom I'm deceived, and I'm glad you happened to be there to put me right."

A florin passed swiftly from Mr. Dumphy's pocket to Mr. Jickle's hand.

At home Mr. Dumphy said nothing whatever about the incident. It was true that he had not parted with one single penny to Mr. Herbert Matchem, but it was also true that he would certainly have done so if the policeman had not intervened. Clearly a man who was to write on charity and business must be above all human weakness. If he ever wrote such a book it was quite likely that Jickle and even Matchem might make mock of it. Ernest Dumphy did not enjoy being made a mock of.

Well, he could wait. After all, people's memories were very short. It was unlikely that he would ever see Matchem again, and Jickle might possibly be transferred to some other post. It would mean delay, but that did not greatly matter. Indeed, the incident of the morning had more than ever convinced Mr. Dumphy that something would have to be done.

Mr. Dumphy had not finished with Mr. Matchem yet. As he sat at breakfast on Monday morning the maid informed him

that a man was at the back door who wished to see him, and said he had an appointment. No thought of Matchem entered Mr. Dumphy's head. He could not remember having given any appointment for Monday. One sometimes forgot. So he went out into the garden and there, to his disgust, encountered Matchem.

Matchem, aged but alert, carried a broom at the slope over his left shoulder. The handle of the broom was quite good. The rest of it was worn down beyond the possibility of its ever being any use to anybody. But Matchem seemed to regard it as the hall-mark of the high-class hard-working gardener who at one time had ten men under him.

"Good morning, sir," said Matchem cheerfully. "You see I'm a man of my word. When we met down at Riverside Walk I told you I was going back to work on Monday morning and you promised to have a job ready for me."

"Never promised you anything," said Dumphy sulkily. "What are you doing with that thing on your shoulder?"

"That's my broom, sir. Been a good friend to me for many a year, that has. Sometimes I've been out to houses where they've had no broom, and so I generally bring my own along. Perhaps you'd say where you'd like me to start."

"This won't do," said Dumphy firmly. "I made you no promise whatever. I said I would ask my friends if they had any work for you, and at present I've nothing to offer you at all."

The old man stroked his chin reflectively. "I see, sir," he said. "And did you ask your friends as you said you would?"

He seemed to have a diabolical instinct for a most inconvenient question.

"I did not," said Mr. Dumphy stoutly. "After what Jickle told me about you, I'd no inclination to help you in any way whatever."

"That man may be in trouble for defamation of character yet. It seems a pity you didn't come to me, Mr. Dumphy, and say that man to man at the time. You'd have saved me a good deal in the way of labour and expense. It was only from the policeman that I heard what your name really was. Then I went round to the public reading-room to get your address and there was a line of eight people waiting for the use of the local directory, so that took me some two hours when I might have been minding Mrs. Tresser's dog and earning

money. Then again, there's this broom. I'd lent that to a man who called himself my friend, and I couldn't get it back from him until I'd paid him three-halfpence he said I owed him, though I had no recollection. Then I've had the long walk up to your house and that's fair wore me out, being just risen as I am from a bed of sickness. And now I've got to go back. All for nothing. Time thrown away, money thrown away, health thrown away, chances thrown away, and all because I was weak enough to trust a gentleman's word. It's very 'ard. You must be made of granite rock, sir, to treat any human being the way you've treated me. Heaven forgive you. I'll make no trouble. I'm going."

"You see," said Mr. Dumphy severely, "you've deceived me. Jickle told me that you're a married man, and yet you said that you hadn't a friend in the world."

"No doubt," said Matchem promptly. "And many a married man would say the same thing if he had the truth and the courage. I'm not wanting to trouble you. Coming to another point, you seemed to be rather struck with that dog of Mrs. Tresser's. He's a mild, well-grown dog. It would never surprise me if he took a prize at a show one of these days. If you cared to buy him, I think I could promise you the first offer."

"I don't want the dog," said Mr. Dumphy firmly, "and I don't want you. And if I ever did buy the dog, I'd never do it through your agency. Understand that at once. And I never promised you work—of that I'm confident. Nothing but your own stupidity could ever have made you suppose so. However, if it's cost you anything, I'm not a hard man and I'm willing to pay you a shilling on the distinct understanding that you never show your face here any more."

"Beggars can't be choosers," said Mr. Matchem humbly.

He received the shilling, and turned it over in his hand.

"It don't look much," he said, "not when you come to think of all I've done. Still, if there's no more coming——"

"And there certainly is not," said Mr. Dumphy.

"Then in that case I'll say adieu."

Suddenly Mr. Matchem went into a fit of laughter—a prolonged, ugly, senile cackle.

"Don't see what you've got to grin at," said Mr. Dumphy angrily.

"No, you wouldn't. It was just that

the thought crossed my mind—and not for the first time neither—how like you is to that dog of Mrs. Tresser's. Why, you're a pair, you two are—ought to be sitting on the mantelpiece, one at each end. Still, I can't afford to stand here laughing and joking with you all the morning. I've got work to do in the world, even if you ain't. I'll get on."

And off he marched, still carrying his old broom at the slope, and looking far more pleased with himself than he had any moral right to be.

When Mr. Dumphy arrived at business, the opinion was commonly expressed that the boss seemed to have got out of bed the wrong side that morning. But gradually his placidity returned. And when at five minutes to one Mr. Winter, the head of that large publishing firm, called, he found Mr. Dumphy quite genial.

"Well, Dumphy," said Winter, "I want you to come out to lunch with me, and then we can have a talk about this book of yours."

"I'm afraid I should be getting my lunch under false pretences. I've decided that I can't do that book—I couldn't find the time for it without neglecting my business here."

"Well, in any case, I'd like to talk it over with you. Come along."

Mr. Winter accepted readily Mr. Dumphy's withdrawal from authorship.

"Of course," said Mr. Winter generously, "no man can do more than he can. Your business is going ahead. You know it, and I know it, and everybody knows it. Against my own interests I must admit you're right. At the same time, I like your idea for this book, and I still mean to do it. And I can put my hand on a good man to do the actual writing. I suppose you have no objection?"

"None whatever."

Mr. Dumphy also agreed to furnish Mr. Winter with a typescript of his plan for the book as he had expounded it at their previous meeting. And so everybody was pleased.

But Mr. Dumphy's pleasure wilted considerably on his return home.

"A most extraordinary thing has happened while you've been away, Ernest."

"Indeed? What was it?"

"You remember that old man who called at breakfast-time this morning, and said he had an appointment with you?"

"Yes. He had no appointment. I bun-

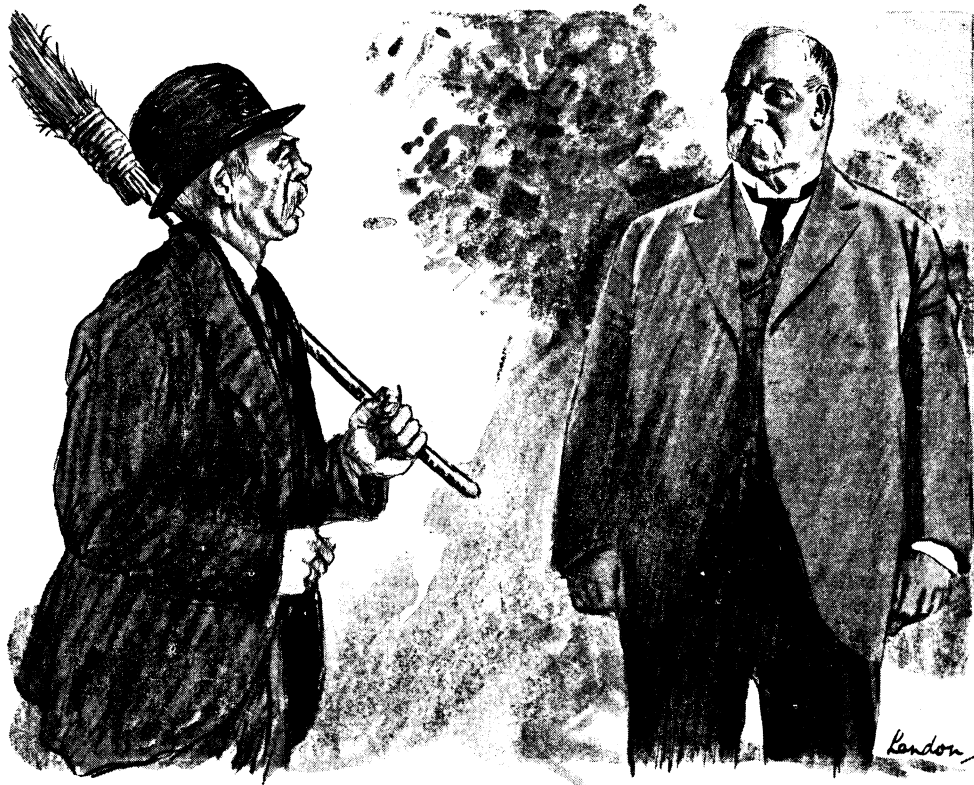
dled him off about his business, and pretty short too. He hasn't had the cheek to come here again?"

"He called about five this afternoon. He'd got a dog with him on a lead, and the dog was panting, rather as if suffering from over-exercise. He was a nice-tempered dog and seemed to take to everybody. Cook, who knows about dogs, thinks he was—or must have been at one time—a fox-terrier."

to have been separated, and became quite hysterical, slapping his leg, and laughing in the silliest way. So I sent him off. Do you think he's wrong in the head?"

"Can't say," said Dumphy. "He's wrong every other way. Seems to have told you a pretty pack of lies anyhow."

"Of course," said Mrs. Dumphy, "seeing that the man came all the way up here on your business, I gave him sixpence, knowing that would be your wish."



"Perhaps you'd say where you'd like me to start," "This won't do," said Dumphy firmly. "I made you no promise whatever."

"Yes, yes. Never mind the dog. What had the man to say for himself?"

"Oh, he was quite open about it. He said you wanted to buy the dog in the morning, but wouldn't go beyond five shillings. And he said he'd decided to let you have it at your own figure. So if I'd give him the money, he'd leave the dog."

"I hope you didn't do it."

"No, indeed. I told him you'd never said anything to me about any dog, and I couldn't take the responsibility. And then he seemed to come over very curious. He said that you and that dog never ought

"It would be my wish," said Mr. Dumphy, "in the case of any decent man having legitimate business with me. Of course, you did not know that this man was a fraud, and sixpence is nothing to bother about. All the same, I'm sorry he had it—he spends every penny he can cadge on drink, so the police tell me."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Dumphy. "That is very sad. Of course, I was not aware of that."

"Well, if that man comes up here again, he's to be ordered off the premises at once. You can tell the servants so. And if he

won't go, send somebody for the police. I've finished with him."

And for a week fate permitted Mr. Dumphy to believe he really had finished with him. And then he found that he had flattered himself.

It chanced that Mr. Dumphy took gentle exercise along Riverside Walk, and, not wishing to overdo it, he rested for a few minutes on a public seat in the sun. And there came up to him a smiling and middle-aged lady leading by a string a much overfed dog. Mr. Dumphy thought he recognised the lady, and he was quite certain that he recognised the dog.

"I beg your pardon," said the lady in a fruity voice, "but you are Mr. Dumphy, are you not?"

"I am," said Mr. Dumphy without enthusiasm.

"Then if you could spare me two minutes, there is something I really ought to say to you."

"Very well. If you'd put the dog on the other side of you, he wouldn't be able to jump up on me."

"Certainly. Come along, doggie darling. We don't put our muddy paws up on a gentleman's nice clean trousers, do we? No, no, that's naughty."

"You were saying?" said Mr. Dumphy coldly.

"Quite so. Everybody speaks of you, if I may mention it, as a gentleman of the very highest character, and I personally have no suspicion of you in the matter. None whatever. But it does show how one may do harm, even when one least intends it, does it not?"

"I may be able to answer that, madam, when I know what you are talking about."

"Ah, yes. (Mother must not begin at the wrong end, must she, doggie?) But of course when you told Matchem you'd give ten pounds for my dog any day——"

"When I—well, go on. Finish the story."

"It was putting temptation in the way of a poor man. He knew that it was of no use to try to buy him from me. Not for all the gold of——"

"So he stole the dog?"

"No, no. He intended to steal him. But just as he was getting near your house, a wave of conscience seemed to come over him and he felt he couldn't do it. He turned round, and brought the darling back to me, and confessed everything. There were tears in his eyes. And I gave him five

shillings just to show him that honesty was the best policy. Of course——"

"Yes," said Mr. Dumphy, rising. "I think that's all you need to say. I never offered Matchem ten pounds, or ten pence, or any other sum for your dog. I've never wanted your dog, and I don't want him now. Matchem brought the dog to my house in my absence, and tried to sell him for a few shillings, and of course failed to get them and was sent off. The sooner you hand the dirty scoundrel over to the police the better. Good afternoon, madam."

Mr. Dumphy raised his hat in a stately manner and moved off.

Mrs. Tresser and the dog followed immediately behind him, and Mr. Dumphy could hear her honeyed accents as she addressed the dog.

"Naughty Matchem. Naughty, naughty. Good little doggies won't love him any more. No, no, no! Never no more. Bite him and scratch him. Naughty, naughty."

Mr. Dumphy resisted a quite natural impulse to hurl Mrs. Tresser into the river and kick the dog in after her. But he quickened his pace in order that he might be out of hearing.

It is said that misfortunes never come singly. It certainly seemed so to Mr. Dumphy when as he neared home he swung round a corner and found himself face to face with Mr. Herbert Matchem.

Matchem looked serious—even to the point of sadness. His appearance and circumambient atmosphere suggested that he had slept in his clothes in ditches for the last six nights and had not been too particular in his choice of the ditches.

"Good evening, sir," said Matchem in a voice of sepulchral solemnity. "Could you spare me a few seconds?"

"No," said Mr. Dumphy firmly. "Clear out."

"Very good, sir," said Matchem humbly. "That will be just as you please. I was only anxious to tell you that I'm sorry—very sorry."

"So you ought to be," said Dumphy.

"And so I am," said Matchem. "I've said things to you, sir, that I never ought to have said. I could bite my tongue out now when I come to think of them."

The immediate risk of such crude surgery was lessened by the fact that Herbert Matchem possessed no teeth.

"I let myself be carried away and forgot my manners, and I'm sorry to say it's not the first time that's happened. But what I

said is nothing to what I done. That's what breaks my heart, for I know better. The first time I threw my eye over you, Mr. Dumphy, I said to myself: 'That's a fine upstanding man, and every inch a sportsman.' Same as what anybody else would say as ever saw you. And yet I tried to sell you Mrs. Tresser's dog. Strictly speaking, it wasn't even my dog at the time, though that might have been arranged. And I might have known that you wouldn't want to buy an animated lump of fat like that. Why, when I was looking after that dog I had to scare the blue tits off his back to stop them from making their dinner on him. I might have known you wouldn't even look at him. You'd be training your sporting dogs for the shooting season, you would. I blame myself very much."

"Cut it out," said Mr. Dumphy wearily. "You say you're sorry. You may be sorrier before I've finished with you. If that's all you've got to say——"

"But it's not, sir. It's not enough for me to say I'm sorry. So far as my means go I want to make restitution."

"Don't be silly."

"I mean every word I say, sir. When you come to break in your dogs for the grouse or the rabbits or the fox-hunting or what not, you will find that what you needs particularly is a good dog-lead. I've got one in my pocket that I've brought up special for you. It's got the swivel attachment that comes in useful. I won't say it's absolutely new—as a matter of fact, it's been in my family for some years—but it's as good as new. And it'll stand examination too. There's no name on it anywhere nor any private mark. I'm not asking you for money, sir. I'm offering you that dog-lead as a simple present to show my sorrow for what is past. I don't say that if you offered me a few coppers for it I'm rich enough to be able to refuse, but if you want it for nothing then you can have it for nothing."

And suddenly Mr. Dumphy remembered that Mrs. Tresser was leading her dog by a string. He formed his own conclusions and drew a bow at a venture.

"I don't want your beastly dog-lead," he said, "and I should advise you to take it back to Mrs. Tresser, whom you stole it from."

"Very good," said Mr. Matchem with dignity. "Very good, indeed. I've put up with enough of your insolence for one afternoon already, but when it comes to an

attack on my personal honour, that's a different matter. If I don't have an apology and suitable reparation from you in the space of five minutes, I shall go and put this in the hands of my solicitors."

"Do," said Dumphy, and moved off. A policeman was coming down the road and that may have been one of the reasons why Herbert Matchem did not pursue the subject.

No doubt our proverbs are in the charge of optimists as well as pessimists. Mr. Dumphy may have been right in deciding that troubles never come singly, but he was yet to discover that it is darkest before the dawn.

He dined placidly, having no fear of Mr. Matchem's solicitors before his eyes. Afterwards he took in the studio a reasonable amount of exercise in the form of dancing. He was back in the house by ten, and at ten precisely a rather awe-stricken parlourmaid announced that a policeman by the name of Jickle would be glad to have two or three minutes' talk with Mr. Dumphy if convenient.

"Ah!" said Mr. Dumphy. "Jickle. I remember him. Quite so, by all means. Show him into the library, and you might put an extra glass on the tray there."

Mr. Jickle was in uniform but had just come off duty.

"I hope, sir," he said, "you will excuse me for coming in like this. But as a matter of fact I've just come on a bit of news that you might be glad to hear. We've got that man Matchem at last."

"Really," said Mr. Dumphy. "This is excellent. And what have you got him for?"

"It's dog-stealing this time, and as clear a case as anybody could wish to have. He was caught in the act and the witnesses are good."

"And what do you suppose he will get?" asked Mr. Dumphy.

"I couldn't say," said Jickle. "There's a fair amount of previous convictions against him, and I should think he'll be no trouble to anybody for some time to come."

"I'm very glad to hear it," said Dumphy. "You'll have a whisky and soda, Jickle, won't you?"

"Thank you very much, sir. Of course, if I were on duty it wouldn't be, strictly speaking, all right, but then I'm not. Thank you, sir. Your very good health."

Jickle put down his glass and resumed. "I should think you might remember, sir,

an occasion when I stepped out from behind some bushes and stopped you from paying for a dog licence for this Matchem what hadn't no dog at the time."

"Yes," said Dumphry, "I remember that."

"Well, of course I don't know how you feel about it, sir. If you was to give evidence to that effect it might do me a bit of good as a zealous officer on the alert and all such. But no doubt there are gentlemen who don't care to figure in any police-court case, and we've got evidence enough to convict anyhow."

"I see," said Mr. Dumphry. "I must say that this is a case in which I should prefer not to appear. I might almost seem—to people who did not thoroughly

understand it—to have carried my generosity to rather a foolish point. Have a cigar, Jickle."

Mr. Dumphry proffered the box of cigars which was reserved especially for charitable uses, and the unsuspecting Jickle took one.

"No doubt," said Mr. Dumphry, "if I were not called upon I should very much prefer it and I should be prepared—er—to make some slight acknowledgment."

"Very good, sir," said Jickle, "I think I can promise you you'll hear no more about it."

And a few minutes later Mr. Jickle left the house enriched by one alleged cigar, and five shillings of Mr. Dumphry's best money.



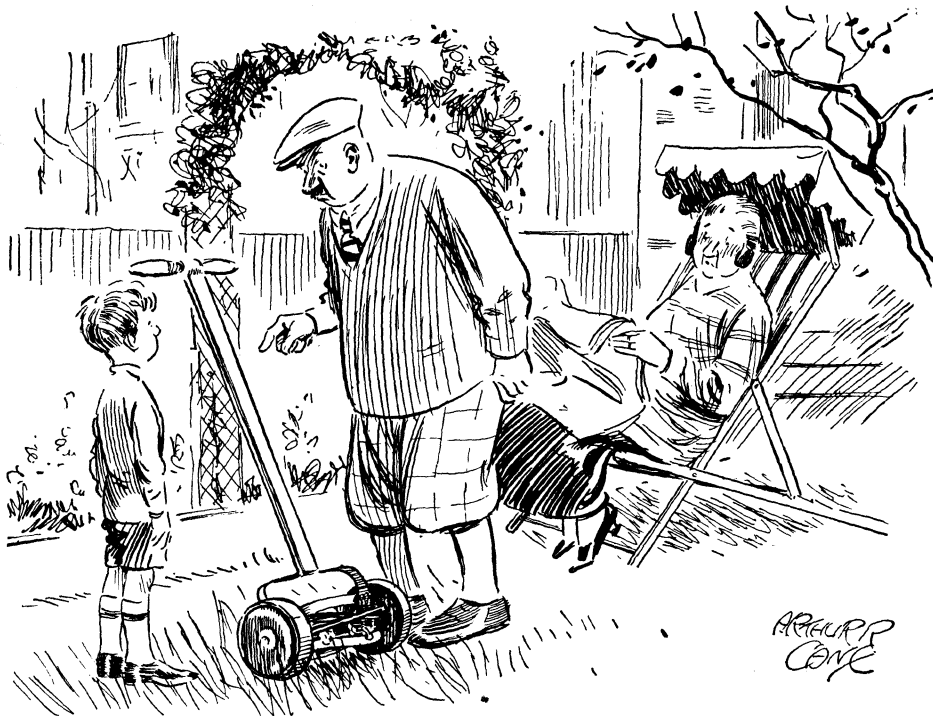
THIS IS JUNE.

BESIDE my garden path delphiniums grow
And roses blow;
Their petals, very velvety and sweet,
Fall at my feet.

Across the golden fields the cuckoos call;
And on the wall
Where clematis and honeysuckle swing,
The blackbirds sing.

The fragrant softness of the summer breeze,
A hum of bees;
The nightingales beneath a silver moon,
All these spell—June.

L. G. MOBERLY.



NEIGHBOURLY APPRECIATION.

"Here, take this mower back to old Brown next door and say it won't cut. He's got a blooming cheek to lend me a lawn-mower in that condition!"

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

CLICKING.

By Richmal Crompton.

"I'm tired of going to dances and dancing every dance with you," said Clare. "It was all right when I first knew you, but for seven long years——" She sighed.

"Well, it's just as bad for me as it is for you," I replied. "I dance with you quite as much as you dance with me. It must be quite as trying for me."

"Let's strike," said Clare.

"'Ear! 'Ear!" I said in a vulgar manner.

"We'll part the minute we get there to-night," she said. "You can find the prettiest girl in the room and I'll find some young Adonis and have a real holiday from you."

"Thank you," I said.

We parted as we had agreed as soon as we entered the room. I found an M.C. leaning limply against the wall. I knew him vaguely at the club.

"Look here, old chap," I said, "do me a favour. Find the prettiest girl in the room and introduce me to her."

He came to life with a start.

"Right!" he said. "I spotted her a few minutes ago. She's a peach."

He took me across the room to a tall girl in black and silver, murmured some unintelligible words meant to be an introduction and drifted away.

"I didn't quite catch your name," I said to her politely.

"I didn't catch yours either," she said.

"Does it matter?"

"Not a bit."

"Are you going to ask me for a dance?"

"I'm going to ask you for them. all."

"How dull!"

"Not at all. And we can sit some out."

"But I don't think it's quite proper. You didn't catch my name."

"As you said, names don't matter. Let's find a nice place to sit in."

We found a very nice place and sat in it.

I looked at her left hand.

"You're married," I said sternly.

"Yes, Sherlock, dear. I am."

"He must be very nice or you wouldn't look so happy."

"I don't. I only pretend to. He isn't nice at all. He doesn't appreciate me."

"The brute! I mean I'm sure he does really."

"He doesn't. And he's so bad-tempered."

Only this week he got into a foul temper about the spring-cleaning."

"Yes, but, dear,—I mean, Mrs. M-m-m-m-m, someone left some soap at the bottom of the stairs and he slipped on it . . . I mean I dare say some one did that."

She looked at me coldly.

"Are you taking his part?"

"Not at all," I said hastily. "I think he's an unmitigated brute."

She softened.

"Are you married?" she said.

"Yes."

"Is she nice?"

"Generally. Sometimes she's a bit—unreasonable."

"But why should you mind?" I said.

"I don't," she said again, "but I can't help being sorry for your poor wife."

"Ah," I said, "if I'd married you . . ."

She smiled.

"Do you think I'd make a nice wife?"

"Adorable," I said. "And do you think I'd make a nice husband?"

"You'd have your faults, of course," she said judiciously. "But on the whole"—she bent towards me in a very forward manner and kissed the tip of my ear—"on the whole you'd be quite a duck."

I closed my eyes.

"Do that again," I said.

"No," she said. "I want to dance now."



A PROBLEM.

MISTRESS: But, Susan, you have put up odd curtains.
SUSAN: 'Ave I, mum? Which is the odd one?

She stiffened.

"Is she?" she said coldly.

"Why should you mind?" I said.

"I don't," she snapped. "Your wives are nothing to me. But—how is she unreasonable?"

"The things she wants. . . . She's always wanting new clothes and she's always wanting to go up to town and she has people to dinner and won't let me wear my nice comfy bedroom slippers for them and she does cross-word puzzles all over the place and keeps asking me for words of so many letters meaning so-and-so when I want to read the paper."

The vision was with difficulty keeping calm. Here she interrupted me.

"All this only shows," she said, "how thoroughly selfish you are!"

We danced together all the evening. At the end of the last dance the M.C. drew me on to one side and whispered:

"I say, I did find you a peach, didn't I? And, by Jove! you do seem to have clicked."

"She's married," I said.

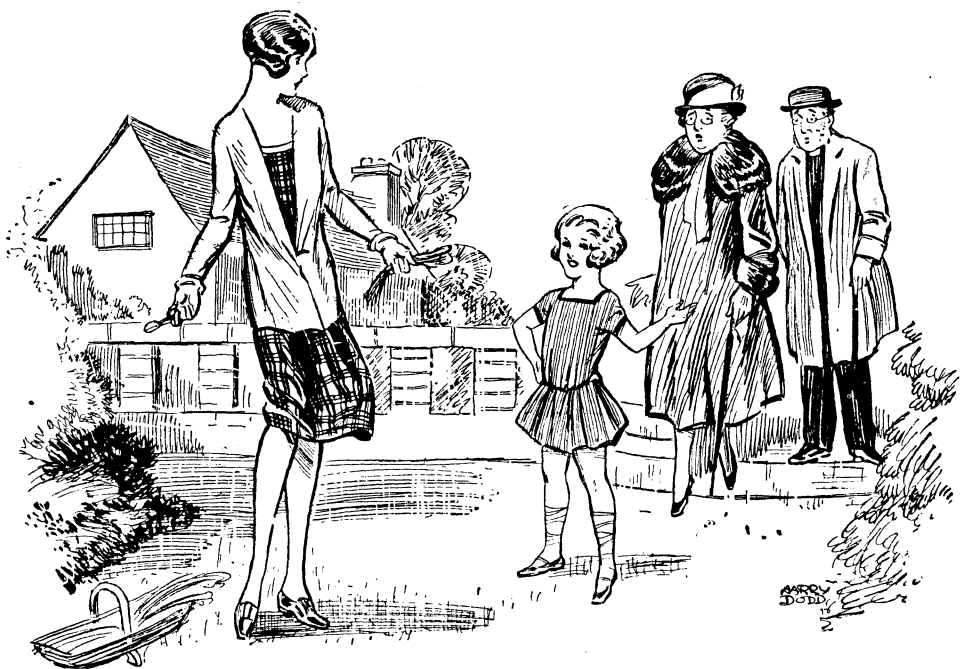
"Hard lines!" he murmured.

"N-not really," I said. "You see, it's me she's married to. We clicked seven years ago."

Then I went on and left him wiping his brow.



THE mystery of the man who for some days past has been sitting on a camp-stool in the street, gazing heavenwards, has now been satisfactorily explained. He is the head of the queue for the total eclipse of the sun.



A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE.

"Mummie, here come the vicar and the vixen."



A LITTLE NATURAL HISTORY.

"Now, Jolunny, we'll go and see the elephants, but don't go too near them or they'll spring!"

PUZZLED.

My Mummy buys our clothes and things
But,—what's so funny,—
My dad goes ev'ry day to town
To get the money.

He gets it from a horrid bank,
That's in the city :
He isn't home till after tea—
It's such a pity.

For there's a bank just down the road
And that's got *plenty* ;
I know—'cause Jane has seen it there—
(Jane's nearly *twenty* !)

Why doesn't Daddy get it there ?
'Cause—don't you see—
He then could stay at home all day
With Mums and me !

Anne Stalley.

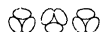
"If I give you a piece of pudding," said the nervous woman to the tramp, "you'll never return, will you ?"

"Well," said the tramp, "you know your pudding better than I do, mum."



A DIOCESAN inspector of schools was recently trying to find out the children's idea of a gentleman. "Now," he said, "what is it that no gentleman would ever think of doing ?"

CHORUS : "Work !"



Two men were becoming abusive in the course of a political quarrel.



THE REASON.

VISITOR : You don't mean to tell me that you have lived in this out-of-the-way place for over thirty years ?

INHABITANT : I 'ave.

VISITOR : But, really, I cannot see what you can find to keep you busy.

INHABITANT : Neither can I—that's why I like it !

"WOULD your experience confirm the popular notion that there is a sense of honour among thieves ?" said the visitor to the prison chaplain.

"Well—no. There may be exceptions," returned the chaplain, "but, generally speaking, I find thieves to be just about as bad as other people."



MOTHER (rushing out to her little girl who is enjoying the thunder and lightning) : Why, Susie, what are you doing out here in this awful weather ?

SUSIE : Oh, mummie, I was just sitting nice here on the steps, and then somebody up in the sky took a flashlight picture of me.

"I think," cried one of them, "that there is just one thing that saves you from being a bare-faced liar."

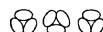
"What's that ?" asked the other.

"Your whiskers," was the reply.



"AH, but hard work doesn't hurt any man," said the curate.

"No, but it's hard on the ol' woman. I've been married three times, an' they all complained."



WE read that banana-coloured dresses will be fashionable in the spring. So easy to slip on.

SNAPPING THE CHILDREN.

By Howard F. Clark.

"I SHOULD like you to photograph the children one day," said my sister, looking hard at the leather case slung across my shoulder.

I had been for a morning stroll, and had taken my camera in case a likely picture presented itself. On the way home I dropped in on my sister Edna, incidentally timing myself to arrive about lunch-time.

"Why not now?" I said, taking the hint. "I haven't taken any snaps at all this morning, so the film is all ready. Where are they?"

"Out in the garden. It's so good of you."

"Not at all. I'll go out now, whilst you're—er—getting the lunch ready."

Edna agreed, and I set off in search of my quarry. I found them playing on the lawn—Daphne, aged four, mothering a family of dolls, whilst John, half his sister's age, appeared to be giving an organ recital. He was seated on a small footstool with a packing-case in front of him on which stood a toy piano. This he was banging with great earnestness: presenting a picture all ready for the taking.

Neither of the children had noticed my approach, so I whipped out the camera. But before I had time to extend the bellows Daphne looked up from her play and saw me.

"Hullo, Uncle. Got your cam'ra?" she asked, running across to me. "What you goin' to do?"

"Hush!" I replied, seeing that the boy, after giving me a welcoming smile, had resumed his occupation. "Don't make a fuss."

She watched with round eyes, whilst I prepared the camera and crouched down to get a good position for the snap. Just as I was about to release the shutter, Daphne placed herself between the lens and John.

"Move away, Daphne," I whispered.

She edged a little nearer the camera.

"No. I mean go over there. I want to take a picture of John."

"John," called Daphne. "Uncle's goin' to make a picshure of you."

The recital came to an abrupt end, and the organist, who had until then presented me with a serious profile, turned and grinned delightedly.

"Is you goin' make a picshure?" he repeated.

"Yes. Go on playing, John."

He thumped the piano, but still looked at me and smiled.

"Look at the music," I instructed.

He at once ceased playing, and put his nose right down on the keys.

"No, no, Look up!"

He obeyed by tilting his head backwards and gazing into the sky.



BACK TO WORK AFTER THE HOLIDAY.

I spent quite a long while trying to get him to resume his original pose, but in vain. The camera had broken the spell, and he adopted anything but natural attitudes, so I gave it up and tuned my attention to his sister.

"Now, Daphne, run and play with your dollies."

"Is you goin' to take *my* picshure?"

"Perhaps."

I was quite right—it was perhaps.

She ran off, turned her back to me and busied herself with her small perambulator.

"Turn this way," I instructed.

She turned about. Seeing the camera in my hands pointing in her direction, she at once assumed a most solemn expression.

"Smile, dear," I coaxed.

She screwed her small face into a grimace worthy of a comedy film star.

"Not like that! Smile nicely, so that I can get a pretty picture."

"Don' wan' a picshure," she pouted.

"All right, go on playing."

I thought that I might catch her unawares, but every time she saw me approach she adopted an owl-like face or else turned her back, ostensibly to adjust the doll's peram cover.

Then came Edna's voice.

"Lunch is ready."

The little ones made a dash for the house. Sadly folding up the camera, I followed more slowly, cramped with the continuous stooping I had adopted in my vain efforts to snap the children.

"Get a good one?" asked their mother, as we took our seats at the table.

I admitted that I had not.

"What *have* you been doing all the time? You've had tons of time to do a simple job like that!"



A SURPRISE.

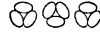
JOHN SMITH was a notorious practical joker, therefore, when sitting in the orchestral stalls, great was his joy to see an unwitting friend sitting in the seat immediately in front of him. Here was the chance of a little fun. His friend's great-coat lay over the back of his chair, the edge of a wallet peeping invitingly from the pocket. Criminally careless, but a wonderful chance for the practical joker. The lights went down, everyone was staring intently at the stage, and under cover of the darkness he leant over and after a little manipulation gently withdrew the wallet. Absurdly simple, he congratulated himself. In fact, if he were ever on the rocks he could be a successful pickpocket. Raffles had nothing on him. In the interval, over a double Scotch, he would approach his friend and gently lead him on to the subject of pickpockets and then surprise him by producing the "borrowed" wallet.

Just then the faultlessly dressed gentleman sitting on John's left leant over and tapped

him on the arm, at the same time handing him something, remarking in a cultured voice: "Honour among thieves y'know."

The object John found in his hand was his gold watch and chain.

John B. Myers.



JONES: I read in a magazine that they



Anthony Hope

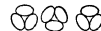
UNFAIR SUPPORT.

HE: What makes you say Mabel is disagreeable? I never found her so.

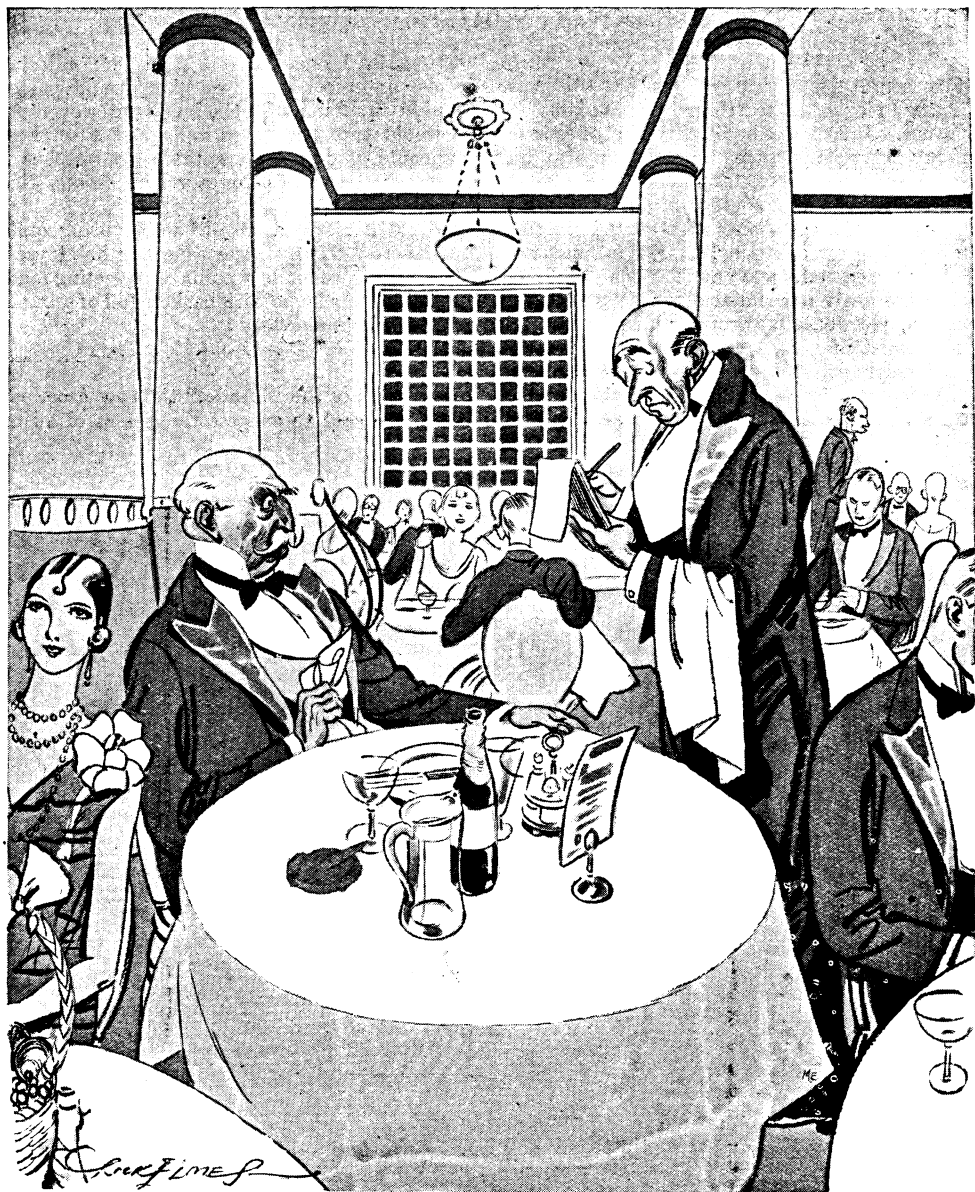
SHE: She always sticks up for anyone I want to talk about.

have been playing chess for thousands of years.

MRS. JONES: Gracious! Isn't the game nearly finished?



AN advertisement in a Chinese paper: "A young Chinese, knowing perfect English and typing, seeks position. Salary no objection." This shows how Western ideas are taking root in China.



FROM DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW.

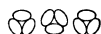
DISCONTENTED DINER: Restaurants are like a lottery.

WAITER (thinking of his tip): Yessir, I often draw a blank!

"THEATRICAL folk as a class," says a writer, "do not take enough daily exercise." Yet how they enjoy a long run.



THE following advertisement points to a solution of the servant problem: "Gentlewoman with well-trained Scottish terrier, willing to help with any household duties."



ASKED if she had heard the community singing, Aunt Jane said she didn't know there was a bird of that name.

A MANUFACTURER wishes to find a new name for the gramophone. We know a man who lives next-door to one, and he invents several new names for it every day.



THE placing of two dark rings round the eyes is the latest beauty hint. This seems to suggest a suitable occupation for retired pugilists.



A DOCTOR says it is dangerous to go to sleep after lunch. Yes, there is always a risk of not waking up in time for tea.

PET-MINDING.

SOMETHING ought to be done about this pet-minding plague. The thing has become a nuisance. It is nice to be neighbourly, of course, but my heart sinks when the man opposite, on the eve of his departure for the seaside, appears on my doorstep with a globe of goldfish and a packet of ants' eggs, and requests me to run his aquarium for a fortnight. My feelings are easily worked on, and at various times I have reluctantly harboured other people's cats, canaries, parrots, silkworms and white mice.

The worst of it is, I am not a great success as a minder, and the rate of mortality among these creatures is alarming. When the owners return and demand their pets, and I point

Certainly I once knew a man who collected specimens of every known variety and pasted them in an album. In the long winter evenings he would turn the pages and gloat over those fragments of decayed vegetable matter, but it never struck me as being a very hilarious kind of hobby.

Would our friends regard us as being quite "all there" if, when spending our holidays in the country, we made a point of collecting land-weed and came home with baskets full of ground-sel and stinging-nettles?



THE steps of the "Truda," the new American dance, are said to suggest the action of swim-



THE HAPPY MEDIUM.

AUTHOR: No dished-up stuff there, my plots are all drawn from real life.

EDITOR: Um, yes, that's all right—but, mind you, we don't want anything *too* improbable.

silently to a row of little graves in the garden, coolness often arises between us.

Why doesn't some enterprising person open a holiday home where domestic pets could be boarded out? I have decided to retire from the business.

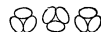


SUPERFLUOUS SEAWEED.

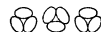
SEAWEED doubtless serves a good and useful purpose in the economy of nature, but when it has left its native*element quite the best thing is to leave it on the beach.

If you hang up a bit behind the door in the fond hope that it will forecast the weather, you will have done everything that is humanly possible with the stuff.

ming. When are they going to invent a dance which suggests dancing?



A BOTANICAL expert says that plants grown indoors have a hard struggle for existence. Yes, we know. Only last week our aspidistra had a nervous breakdown.



WE read that "four brunettes are affected by the influenza epidemic to every blonde." Germs, unlike gentlemen, prefer brunettes.



A DOCTOR says that kissing shortens life. Do the Assurance Companies know this?

TO EVERY EMPLOYER

THE old days when the apprentice slept under the counter and was one of the family have gone; but all right-minded employers still feel some responsibility for the welfare of their staff.

It is within the experience of most employers that assistance from the firm has been required when a member of the staff has died leaving his dependants unprovided for. A life assurance would have avoided this.

Why not, in the interests of everyone, insist on all the members of your staff being adequately assured?

The Prudential grant assurances to meet all circumstances and all pockets, and would like to draft a special scheme for your staff.

A copy of a new booklet showing the direct use of Group Insurance to every employer will be posted to you on request.

THE PRUDENTIAL ASSURANCE COMPANY LTD.

Holborn Bars, E.C.1

P.P. 122

THE WINDSOR MAGAZINE.

THE CHILD-LOVER.

By Ernest Doughty.

THE little old gentleman in the grey suit with grey trilby to match bobbed happily along the street in the wintry sunshine. Geniality peeped out from his twinkling spectacles and propitiation dwelt in the line of the gently-stooping figure. Here was a man holding out the hand of friendship to all the world.

With children the friendship became love. A steam-roller had been at work on the roadway and the pile of stones bordering the pavement formed a happy hunting-ground for the smaller youth of the neighbourhood. Happy and healthy, a little cluster of boys and girls were careering wildly up, down, and across the pile, regardless of damage to limb or clothing lurking in the jagged flints. The old gentleman paused. To chide? No. Could he not remember his own youth? A chuckle of enjoyment escaped him. Before passing on, he described the rules, dimly borne in mind, of a game called "King of the Castle" which had, in similar circumstances, lightened many an hour of his boyhood.

Farther along the streets a game was in progress which involved hopping and scraping along the pavement on one foot, the while avoiding, if possible, certain mysterious chalk lines. With knightly courtesy, beaming and bobbing, the grey-clad figure stepped into the roadway rather than disturb the tiny damsels engaged in their solemn ritual.

And so throughout his progress. Not a group of playing urchins but received his benediction,

sometimes silent, sometimes accompanied by words of advice and exhortation.

One thing was, however, noticeable. The more strenuous sports seemed to have a peculiar attraction for him. A game of "schools" on a doorstep almost escaped notice, whilst some grubby urchins indulging in leap-frog on a macadam surface received material evidence of



THE EXPLANATION.

"Why do you always snub Mrs. Moneybags so?"

"Because I consider her ignorant, ugly, vulgar, ill-mannered, tactless, brainless, presumptuous, interfering and—"

"I see—you don't like her!"

his approval. What was the explanation? Could it be the reaction in spirit of one to whose—alas!—frail body virile sports had long been denied?

At last the old gentleman's pilgrimage came to an end. With the unmistakable glance of a proprietor, he entered a shop.

Over the doorway was the sign "J. BLOBS. BOOTS AND SHOES. CHILDREN'S FOOTWEAR A SPECIALITY."



What is the secret of those vivid lips, that delicate flush so piquant and lovely, which fascinate and enthrall? It lies in KHASANA MYSTIC LIPSTICK and CREAM ROUGE, which, although nearly colourless, give an exquisite tint which harmonises with each individual complexion. The colour does not rub off, it is impervious to water, therefore ideal for sea bathing. It is, however, easily removed with soap and water.

Price 1/6 each.

The Toilet also demands:

Perfume,
Powder,
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Lotions,
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Also
Darupan
Nail
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All of the
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PREVENT GREYNESS,
PREVENT THINNING,
ENCOURAGE NEW GROWTH,
and generally to
BEAUTIFY YOUR HAIR

USE

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Speedwriting

The A.B.C. Shorthand.

Written only with the
Letters of the Alphabet.

You can begin to use it at once, and master it in from 3 to 6 weeks. It is so simple that a child can learn it, yet built with such scientific skill on the natural habits of thought, speech and writing, that once you have mastered the principles, you can "Speedwrite" any word in the language. And the fun of it is, you don't have to learn a single new sign or symbol—you know every one of them now. For you just write Speedwriting with the letters of the alphabet, in the script you have been using all your life.

TYPE IT OR WRITE IT.

You can write it on the typewriter, too—Speedwriters can read each other's notes like longhand—(Speedwritten notes never "grow cold"). Large organizations are having it taught to their staffs to facilitate inter-office work. Students find Speedwriting a revelation for note-making. Secretaries delight in the ease and accuracy with which they write this shorthand after a few weeks of study. Business men, stenographers, lawyers, writers, doctors—all kinds of people all over the world—find that Speedwriting is the shorthand that they have always wanted. You can learn it at home in your spare time. Send to-day for the

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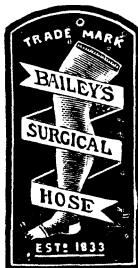
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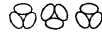
THE WINDSOR MAGAZINE.

THE BEAUTIFULLEST BUTTERFLY.

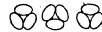
An optimist is Jimmy,
And his smudgy little face
Is warm and moist and shining
With the ardour of the chase;
With his ragged little cap in hand,
He charges up the hill,
But the "Beautifullest Butterfly"
Keeps dodging Jimmy still.

Through grove and glade she lures him,
The Queen of butterflies;
Sometimes he almost captures
This fairy in disguise;
For she lingers tantalisingly,
Till warned by Jimmy's tread;
Then the "Beautifullest Butterfly"
Goes dancing on ahead.

eats ten times its own weight in vegetable food every day. That is one of the reasons why greengrocers seldom keep grasshoppers as pets.



"I AM going in pursuit of knowledge," said the grown-up son as he followed his young brother's governess out into the garden.



IN an article on the toilet it is stated that sailors make good hair-dressers. It is a life on the permanent wave which has done that for them.



MORE OFFICIALDOM.

OFFICE BOY : The Inspector of Nuisances, sir.
EMPLOYER : What does he want ?
OFFICE BOY : He said he wanted to see you, sir.

A dear, elusive vision,
Of wondrous interest,
If Jimmy caught his dryad,
The game might lose its zest;
But Jimmy will remember her
On many a Summer day—
The "Beautifullest Butterfly"
Who always flew away.

Fred. W. Bayliss.

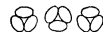


A MAN was ejected from a theatre for continuously tapping his foot in time with the singing. No doubt he thought he had music in his sole.



An entomologist states that a grasshopper

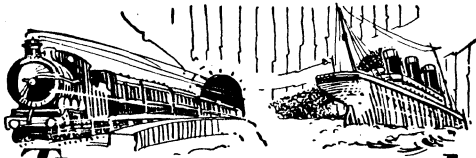
It is now claimed that the bagpipes were invented in Queen Elizabeth's reign. What good purpose can be served by trying to fix the blame after all these years ?



AN eminent professor says it is possible to make our nerves produce a noise like the bagpipes. Of course we should do it only under extreme provocation.



AN ancient Roman bath with a skeleton standing beside it has been unearthed. It is said to be the earliest known example of a plumber gazing at his job.



There's no need to be afraid of travel sickness

Rough seas, long tedious train journeys
or even an aeroplane or motor trip cannot
upset your system if you take

**MOTHERSILL'S
SEASICK REMEDY**

No Drugs. No Danger. From all Chemists.

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For your
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ALWAYS USE
GREEN'S
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The Best—Nothing Better

DELICIOUS FRENCH COFFEE.

**RED
WHITE
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For Breakfast & after Dinner.

In making, use LESS QUANTITY, it being
much stronger than ORDINARY COFFEE.

Smart Beauty Secrets

By MIMOSA

To-day every woman of taste and refinement avoids the use of cosmetics or made-up toilet preparations which give an artificial appearance. The fresh, natural complexion that few women have, and every woman desires, is best obtained by use of original ingredients already at hand or that can be obtained from any reliable chemist. My advice is to avoid the use of most made-up face creams, rouge, and beautifying preparations. They are usually obvious and often injurious. If you will get only the proper original ingredients, you will be satisfied with the result. Insist on having just what you ask for. If the chemist hasn't it he can immediately get it from his wholesaler. However, many of my suggestions involve no expense whatever.

"Discoloured Skin."—Your skin is not sufficiently active to throw off the microscopic particles of dead, discoloured tissue. Get about an ounce of Mercolized Wax and use it at night like a cold cream. Mercolized Wax absorbs the dead outer complexion, revealing the firm, fresh new complexion—a really new skin with natural youthful colour and soundness.

"Moustache."—Your trouble is a common one, but I beg of you do not think of that "operation." It is intensely painful, often unsatisfactory and very expensive. Get an ounce of pheminol—it costs 4s.—and apply a little to the unsightly hairs. In a few moments they can be rubbed off and the skin will be quite clear. You can use it on your arms as well.

"Undeveloped Figure."—Three or four coconoids taken each day after meals will develop those graceful curves which lend womanhood its greatest charm. Any chemist will supply them, and the bud—arrested in its growth by lack of glandular vitality—will blossom anew and you will become the woman nature intended you to be.

"Perspiring."—Toilet powder will not prevent excessive perspiration, but white pergol will immediately stop the very unpleasant odour. Dust the affected surface with it occasionally.

"Weak Nerves."—First of all you must bear in mind that each of the millions of cells, which make up our nervous system, needs food, otherwise it starves. Weak nerves are starved nerves. Iron-Ox tiny tonic tablets keep your blood pure and rich in nerve-strengthening elements. Give them a trial.

"Beautiful Eyes."—The "bald" look that you say is caused by your thin eyebrows and lashes may be remedied by using some mennaleine. Apply this to the eyebrows and they will grow darker and thicker. It will also help make your lashes grow long and curling.

"Anti-Rouge."—Probably your rouge is merely chemically dyed chalk. If you need more colour, just rub a little collindum on your cheeks. It is not obvious like rouge, gives a natural colour that defies detection, and is perfectly harmless.

"Thin Skin."—Evidently the soap you are using has too much alkali, a fault of many, even the most expensive toilet soaps. I use, and can heartily recommend, Pilemta, an English soap that is really soothing to the most sensitive skin and is delightfully perfumed.

"Fluffy Hair."—Your hair will be charmingly fluffy and wavy if you just shampoo it with stallax. A teaspoonful to a cup of hot water is sufficient for each shampoo. It does not leave that unpleasant soapy feeling after rinsing and it imparts to the hair some of its own delicate natural perfume.

"Natural Bloom."—Your friend probably uses a solution of clemenite instead of powder. Get an ounce and dissolve it in 4 ounces of water and apply it to the face occasionally. You will have a natural "bloom" that cannot be otherwise acquired. The effect will last all the evening, or even all day, without renewing, and clemenite is very beneficial to the skin.

"Healthy Slimness."—The most convenient method, and at the same time the most efficient for the fat person to adopt, is to obtain a few Clynol Berries from the chemist and to swallow one after each meal. They quickly and easily remove all traces of excess fat without exercises, starvation diet, or other weakening methods.

THE PERFECT CITIZEN.

By V. W. Bullock.

I FIRST met him about three months ago, on a morning that will long remain in my memory. I had overslept, sliced a neat little corner off my chin—one of those cuts which will not be comforted—forgot my season ticket and had to pay ordinary fare, missed my usual train, and arrived in town in a towering rage about half an hour late. Everything looked black. And then I met him.

His chin was not cut, and his smart appearance was to me an irritating sight. His air of graceful ease in such a busy street first attracted my attention, and the scowl I gave him was anything but encouraging, but his smiling face never clouded for an instant. He was obviously one of those fortunate mortals who are superior to the petty things of life.

I passed him again on the following morning. He was in evening dress—a circumstance that indicated that he had not yet been to bed—yet his smile was, if anything, sunnier than ever. So infectious was his good humour, that I found myself smiling in return, and reached the office feeling almost jocular, a mood most unusual with me before I have had lunch.

On each of the days that followed, I found myself looking forward to meeting this cheerful soul, and commenced to study him very closely. He seemed to be very unorthodox in his dress. Frequently he wore a rain-coat when it was not raining, and sometimes a highly-coloured jumper undimmed by a jacket, but otherwise his deportment was all that could be desired. I never saw him smoking, and I certainly never heard him swear. Occasionally I caught a glimpse of him through the crowd when I was hurrying home in the evening, but I never saw him looking tired, and he was invariably as spruce in the evening as he had been in the morning.

He seemed to be fond of sport. I often saw him early in the day dressed in plus-fours and carrying a bag of clubs, and on one occasion I was surprised to see him decked out in full hunting rig.

The sight of him always had such a tonic effect on me that I naturally experienced a sense

of loss if I happened to miss him any morning, and I was once dejected for a whole week whilst he was apparently out of town. However, he returned all right, but this time in a workman-like suit of overalls. I imagined that all kinds of things had happened. Perhaps he had lost all his money, and being no longer able to lead a life of leisure, had resolved to work for his living. My heart warmed towards this plucky fellow.

After this I did not see him quite so often, but he always turned up at regular intervals, neatly



IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST.

"Madam, I am a piano-tuner. I've come to tune your piano."
 "But I didn't send for you."
 "I know, but your neighbour sent me."

dressed in clothes that had obviously been made to measure. It had not occurred to me that he might be a family man until I saw him one morning with a small boy in an Eton suit. In spite of his adversity he was, at all events, doing the right thing by the boy, but only he, poor chap, would know what the struggle had been.

The effect of his cheerful smile has made a new man of me, and it will be a sad day if ever a careless window-dresser brings about his downfall.

THE JULY WINDSOR

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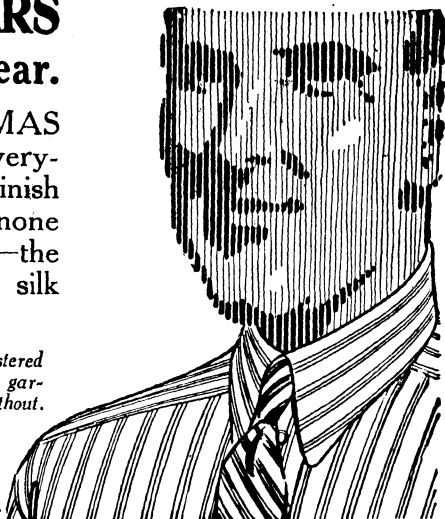
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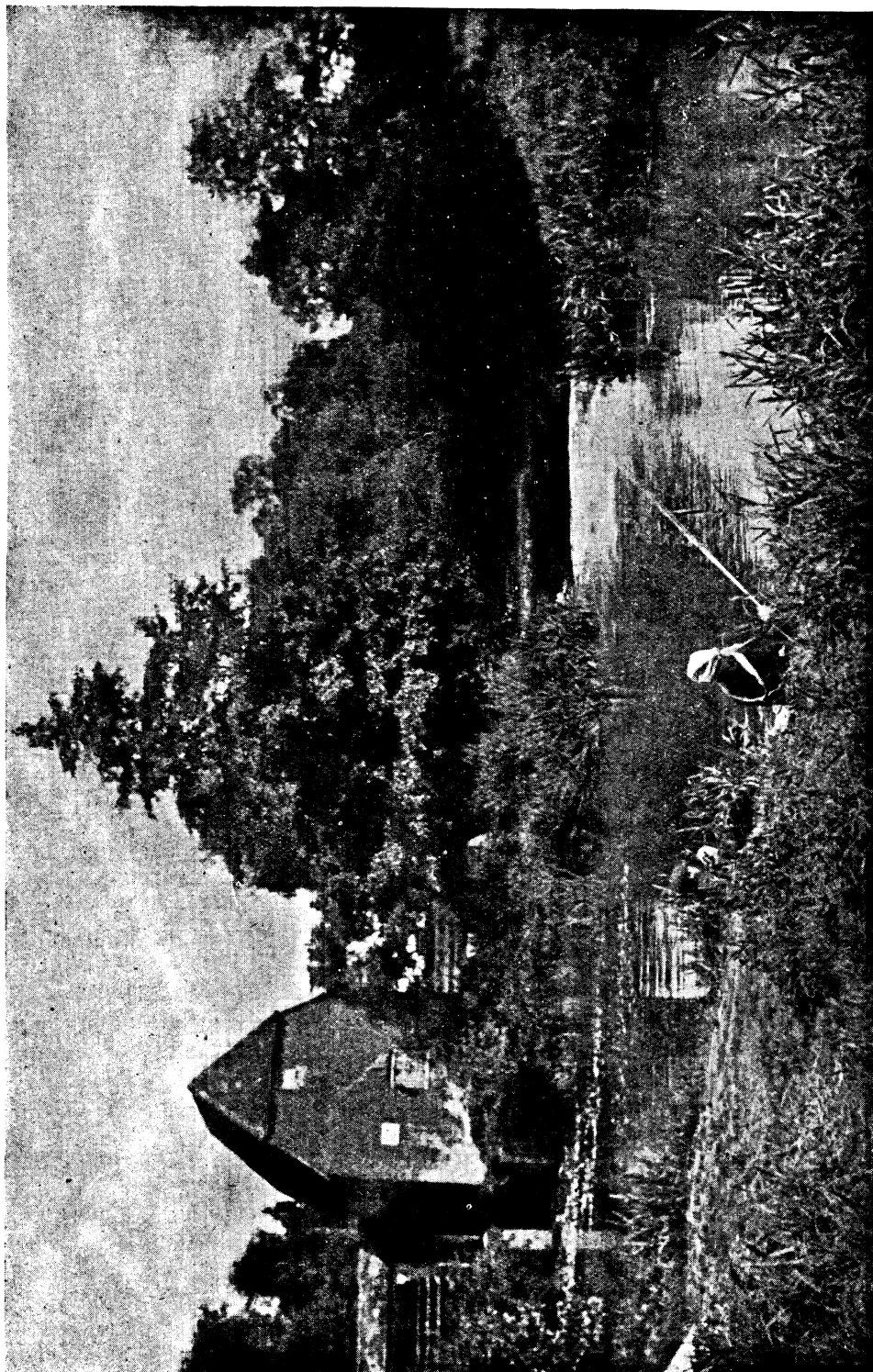
He's on the run all the time—nobody knows what he'll be up to next. From the moment he scrambles from the breakfast table until—reluctantly—he obeys the summons "off to bed, son." And away he's bundled to the bathroom where grubby knees and hands are made pink again. What a glowing, healthy, tired-but-happy cherub it is who is finally tucked up after his bath with

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THE MILL STREAM.

From a Photographic Study by I. Victor Medvedev.



"There came a cry, not loud, but full of bitter, yearning pain, 'Don't say things like that!'"

◉ COUSIN AMY ◉

By MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES

◉ ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLIER ◉

THE Duchess unhooked the speaking-tube of the motor :

"I should like to see the effects of the fire, before we go on to the farm-house where Miss Patterdale has spent the last two nights. If you turn in at the gate which is in front of us, it will bring us, I think, straight to the house."

She hung up the speaking-tube and leant back. It had been a long, cross-country drive to this remote hamlet, but the journey was now almost at an end. As the motor rolled swiftly along under the high beeches of Scalands Park, the Duchess took a folded letter out of her handbag, and read it through.

SCALANDS,
Tuesday Morning.

MY DEAR DUKE,—

I am writing to tell you, my kinsman, of the terrible misfortune which has just

overwhelmed me. The house in which I was born, the house in which I have spent the whole of my life, was burnt down last night. I am sorry to have to tell you that the fire was caused by a piece of gross carelessness on the part of my great-niece, Angela. I cannot yet find it in my heart to forgive her, but I suppose I shall do so some day. Meanwhile I am utterly desolate, and have no place wherein to lay my head. Some gentlefolk who, not long ago, took my Cross-Road Farm, have kindly extended to me their hospitality. But I cannot stay with them more than a few days. They had to send away two or three of what, I believe, are called paying guests, in order to find room for me and Angela.

Your affectionate cousin,

AMY PATTERDALE.

Small wonder that the impulsive Duchess

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had persuaded the Duke to allow her to telegraph, "Laura will come and fetch you both to-morrow, about five o'clock. Hope you will stay with us as long as you find it convenient to do so."

Miss Patterdale, now nearly seventy, and by way of being an invalid, was not an agreeable woman; but if narrow-minded and censorious by nature, she had always tried to do her duty, both by her tenants, and by the young great-niece who was now her heiress.

As she put "Cousin Amy's" letter back into her bag, the Duchess thought with pity of Angela Patterdale. Twice the girl had been asked to stay a week-end at the Castle, to form one of a party of light-hearted young people. But each time the invitation had been refused. Miss Patterdale was known to be early-Victorian in her views concerning the behaviour of young people.

Angela was now twenty-two, but she was still treated like a child by the woman she called "Aunt Amy." At the age of eighteen she had been taken to London and presented at Court. But after a few weeks spent with a dull widowed contemporary of Miss Patterdale, she had been taken back to Scaland Park. And now the aunt and niece were said to get on ill together, and the Duchess told herself that if it was really true that Angela, through carelessness, had caused the fire, the girl was indeed to be pitied.

The motor suddenly emerged from under the trees, and drew up before the gaunt skeleton of what had been, until two days ago, a small, beautiful, and unspoilt Elizabethan manor-house.

At a sign from his mistress, the footman opened the door of the motor, and, stepping down, she gazed, with a feeling of melancholy and regret, at the piteous scene.

Against the blue sky of a lovely early summer day rose the blackened, jagged walls which were all that remained of what had been the cherished home of generations of Patterdales. Leaning against two of the windows which now looked like blinded eyes, were rough hoardings across which had been rudely scrawled in chalk, "Danger. Do not come too near," while under tarpaulins spread about the wide, now trampled-down lawn, were still stowed the furniture and household effects saved from the fire.

The Duchess turned away and, as she stepped up into the motor, she remembered with sudden vividness her one visit to Sca-

lands Manor as a bride. Even then the Duke's "Cousin Amy" had seemed to the young visitor an old woman.

Cross-Road Farm was a long, low, rambling-looking house, set in a charming garden now filled with gaily-coloured, sweet-scented flowers. As she walked up the stone-paved path leading to the front door the Duchess, who sometimes felt a naïve longing for "the simple life," told herself that she could have led a very happy existence in such a homestead.

A pleasant, middle-aged woman, evidently the mistress of the house, opened the front door: "Miss Patterdale has gone to say good-bye to the Rector, but she won't be long," she observed, while showing the visitor into a tiny wainscoted room. "Miss Patterdale's sitting-room is next door, but I couldn't get in there just now. She must have taken the key with her."

After the other had left her, the Duchess, who was always interested in other people's lives, began walking about the attractive, curious-looking little room.

She noticed, with some surprise, that in a deep recess in the thick old wall stood a row of slender glass vases filled with tulips. "A clever, original way of arranging flowers," she said to herself; and then she sat down in the one easy-chair the study contained.

All at once there came the sound of a French window opening and shutting, and then a clash of voices—those of a man and a woman—sounding startlingly near.

"I hate the thought of leaving you! Why should she force me now to go to a place where she has always prevented my going before—just because she was angry they didn't ask her too? I could quite well stay on here as a paying guest."

"Don't talk so loud, darling. It really isn't safe! Of course you must go with her to Settléham Castle. Apart from one all-important reason, you seem to have forgotten the Duke might be awfully useful to me later on?" There was a pause, and then the invisible speaker added in a low voice—"In some ways, Angela, this is a tremendous bit of luck for us—"

"I don't know what you mean," was the cross answer.

"In big houses of that sort no one notices anything—and you'll be left a lot alone with her."

At once came the passionate, defiant answer: "I suppose that would seem a treat to you? I'll only go if you'll promise to

come too! There must be lots of hotels in the town."

"Of course if you insist on my coming, I'll have to come. But I think it's stupid, as well as dangerous." His voice dropped, "I've brought what you will have to take with you."

"I won't take them! What you're asking me to do is *very* unfair. You never think of me——"

"All right! We'll throw the whole thing up, Angela. There's a good job, as well as a good-looking and good-tempered girl, waiting for me in Belgrade——"

There came a cry, not loud, but full of bitter, yearning pain, "Don't say things like that! You know I'll do anything—anything you want me to do," and the voice, which the Duchess now knew to be that of Angela Patterdale, broke into a sob.

The unwitting eavesdropper looked about her, feeling utterly bewildered. It was as if that angry, ungracious interchange of words was taking place *here*, in this tiny room, empty but for her own presence.

She rose from her chair, took a few cautious steps forward, and then, with a sensation of relief, she realised that the row of high, flower-filled glasses concealed an oblong aperture in the wall between the tiny room where she now stood, and the one next it.

Slowly she approached the curious peephole, and then she saw, without being seen, the two in the other room. They were still talking, though now in so low a whisper that, to her relief, she heard nothing of what they were saying.

A tall, slender, singularly good-looking man stood close to a very plain young woman, whose masses of fair shingled hair—her only beauty—had been brushed back off her forehead and looked, so the Duchess told herself, like a lion's mane.

The apartment in which they were standing, was low-ceilinged and spacious, obviously the best sitting-room of the farm. On the floor, and heaped up on the chairs, was a curious, motley collection of objects; and all at once it flashed into the unseen watcher's mind that they must be the flotsam and jetsam of old Miss Patterdale's precious personal possessions saved from the fire.

Suddenly the Duchess heard three taps on the window of the other room, and at once the man exclaimed, "Your aunt mustn't catch me here——"

"She can't catch you. I've locked the door——"

"And what if she comes round by the garden?"

"Nothing would induce her to do such a thing——"

"How can you tell that? I really must go, darling. It's so stupid, so useless to take *any* risk!"

He took the girl in his arms, and they exchanged a long, clinging kiss. Then he opened the French window and vanished into the garden, while Angela Patterdale walked quietly across the room and unlocked the door.

The Duchess retreated to an easy chair and sat down, feeling, to use an old-fashioned and vivid expression, thoroughly upset. It was plain—at least she thought it plain—that Angela Patterdale was engaged to this man, either secretly, or in defiance of her aunt's wishes.

The incident produced a most unpleasant impression on Angela's coming hostess, and she could not help feeling genuinely sorry that she had surprised the girl's secret—if indeed it were a secret.

The door slowly opened, and the old woman whom the Duke called "Cousin Amy" came through it. She was tall, thin, gaunt, and she looked very ill, her face, indeed, of a chalky white colour, though her green eyes, the only feature she and her great-niece had in common, were unnaturally bright.

"I was not expecting you till five o'clock, Duchess. I'm sorry I was out when you arrived——"

The words were uttered in cold, incisive tones.

The Duchess, who was impulsive and warm-hearted, would have liked to kiss the poor old lady; but Miss Patterdale's manner was almost forbidding.

"It's very good of the Duke," she went on stiffly, "to offer me such generous hospitality. It will only take me a few moments to get ready."

"I hope the second car has arrived," exclaimed the Duchess. "I mean the one for your maid and the luggage."

"I have no maid," replied Miss Patterdale. "Owing to the income-tax I have become a poor woman, so when my faithful Beckett had to go back to her mother, I made up my mind that I would do without a maid. The very little maiding I require is done by Angela."

"I'm very sorry for Angela," the Duchess instinctively lowered her voice. "It must be so terrible for her to know that her

carelessness caused the fire. What exactly did she do, Cousin Amy?"

"Left a lamp burning by her bedside

told me about Angela," observed the Duchess slowly. "She must be feeling very sad, for, after all, your beautiful

"Dr. Wakefield has discovered that your Aunt Amy is being poisoned. Two days ago, had it not been for a certain precaution the doctor thought it right to take . . . she would have died in agony."

till the oil caught fire. You need not waste any pity on that girl; she has hardly said she was sorry."

"I hope you were well insured?"

The Duke had shown a good deal of interest as to this question. And the Duchess was surprised, for Miss Patterdale was known to be penurious, by the quick answer—"Yes, the value of the building is completely covered. Angela's trustees forced me to double the insurance on the house two years ago. I was very much vexed at the time, but I suppose I ought to be glad now, though of course nothing can replace—" and then old Miss Patterdale did show some trace of real feeling, indeed tears came into her eyes. But she was obviously ashamed of betraying such emotion, for she hurried across to the window, and furtively taking out her handkerchief, wiped her tears away.

"I'm sorry to hear what you've just

house was to have been hers some day."

"I've done my duty by her," said the other emphatically. "Poor as I've become of late years, she's always had a good horse



to ride: and she went to two hunt balls last year."

"I'm glad of that! I always believe in girls having what is called a good time."

"Not so I, Duchess! What's called 'a good time' makes girls unfit for the only life a woman ought to lead."

"And is there any chance of a happy marriage for Angela?" inquired the



"Angela had grasped the pillar of her four-post bed. Her green eyes were dilated, and in them was an expression of almost animal terror."

"You mean," said the Duchess gently, "the life of wife and mother?"

Cousin Amy hesitated. "Yes, I suppose I do mean that."

Duchess. "Is she engaged?"

"Engaged? As far as I know, and I think I should have known it, she has never even had what I would call an offer of

marriage. She is very unattractive. Her only beauty was her hair, yet, in spite of the fact that I had, of course, forbidden her to do so, she secretly had it all cut off and what they call, I believe, shingled!"

At that moment the lady of the house opened the door of the tiny sitting-room. "Miss Angela asked me to tell you, Miss Patterdale, that she thinks she has forgotten nothing. I helped her to pack, and she has just gone on with the luggage——"

"Gone on with the luggage?" exclaimed the old lady in a tone of extreme surprise and annoyance. "What an extraordinary thing to do!"

And then the Duchess intervened. "I suppose she thought it would be more comfortable for us if she went in the other motor."

"She ought not to have done such a thing without asking my permission," and Miss Patterdale pressed her lips together.

But after they were well away from the village, and the Duchess had had time to try some of her innocent, but potent arts of kindness, sympathy, and understanding on the Duke's old kinswoman, Miss Patterdale suddenly exclaimed, with a spot of red rising to each of her pale cheeks: "I feel I ought to confess, Laura, that I was not quite truthful when I told you that Angela had never received an offer of marriage. Three years ago she engaged in a secret and, I think, disgraceful, love affair, with the son of a farmer about three miles from here—not one of my tenants, I need hardly say. The father of the loutish young man came and saw me about it, and at first I couldn't believe what he told me was true. I shall never forget the interview. It was odious, odious! He evidently supposed I had it in my power to disinherit Angela, and I did not enlighten him—the matter was none of his business. Still, as a result of this interview, the affair came to an end. Angela has never forgiven me, though we have never spoken of the matter since."

What a melancholy, sordid story! The Duchess felt a rush of pity for the girl. Was it possible, she asked herself, that the good-looking man she had seen holding Angela Patterdale in his arms, scarce an hour ago, was a local farmer's son? Everything is possible nowadays; but somehow she felt sure that Angela's present, and evidently secret, lover, was a very different type of man from the one of whom the old-fashioned gentlewoman, now sitting up-

right by her side, had just spoken with such acrid contempt.

II.

TEN days had gone by since the arrival of Miss Patterdale and her niece at the Castle. They had been long, dull days, for the Duke had had to leave for town, and, owing to a case of measles in the nursery, there were no other visitors. Now, in the late afternoon, after her solitary tea, the Duchess sat trying to read a book in her own sitting-room. But soon she gave up the pretence, and began considering, with almost painful intentness, Miss Patterdale, and, what was to her of far greater moment, the problem of Miss Patterdale's niece and heiress. Incidentally the old lady was really ill. She had taken to her bed almost at once, and the doctor had been in daily attendance.

But it was round Angela Patterdale that her hostess's mind revolved. The Duchess had a suspicion, now deepening into certainty, that the girl was constantly meeting the man with whom she, at Scalands, had so strangely surprised her, and whom Angela evidently loved with all the strength of a sullen, passionate, frustrated nature.

During the last ten days the Duchess had tried to win, if not Angela's confidence, then some measure of liking, but, do what she might, she could make no way with her. Indeed it was plain that the girl regarded her hostess as belonging to her aunt's faction. Not that Angela allowed herself to say a word against Miss Patterdale. To the surprise of the Duchess, she "maided" her devotedly. The old lady, though by now really ill, refused with angry obstinacy all thought of a nurse, and was remorselessly selfish in making her niece dance attendance on her.

And yet, even so, either early in the morning, or very late in the afternoon, Angela would always manage to slip out of the Castle, and, preferably by some garden door, go off on what was supposed to be a long solitary walk.

The Duchess sighed: she knew it was unprofitable to waste time thinking over the curious problem of Angela Patterdale. Both aunt and niece were on her nerves, and she longed for the conclusion of their visit, while aware that there was no hope of this as long as Miss Patterdale's illness continued. Why, only yesterday Cousin Amy had had what the housemaid had called "a very bad turn."

There came a knock at the door, and Doctor Wakefield, who was not only her medical man, but also a dear and trusted friend, came into the room, carefully shutting the door behind him.

"May I have a word with you, Duchess?" He looked perturbed—unlike his usual, calm self.

"You don't think Miss Patterdale worse?" she exclaimed. "I thought she looked dreadfully ill this morning!"

"She is certainly worse," he announced gravely—and then, "I do wish we could persuade her to have a nurse."

"I wish we could. And it's all the more odd of her not to allow anyone to wait on her but her niece, as, unfortunately, the old lady and Angela Patterdale don't really get on together."

"I should put it even more strongly myself. To my mind Miss Angela hates her aunt."

"Would you go as far as that?"

"I would indeed; and it's not surprising, considering how the old lady treats her. Who could suppose the unfortunate girl to be her adopted daughter?"

"Oh, but that's a great exaggeration!" cried the Duchess quickly. "Angela is Miss Patterdale's great-niece, and the real reason why the old lady dislikes her so is that she is bound to come into the Scandals property."

"That's not a reason for treating the poor girl as a kind of slave. No servant would put up with it for a moment."

Then, after a pause, and in a very different tone, he added: "Miss Patterdale's condition puzzles me very much. I mean her physical, not her cantankerous mental, state. In fact, I'd give a good deal to know what *really* is the matter with her."

"She has suffered a great shock," said the Duchess thoughtfully. "That old house took the place, with Cousin Amy, of all normal human affections."

"I quite realise the truth of what you say, Duchess. But she has certain definite symptoms which point to—" and then he stopped dead.

"What symptoms do you mean?" asked the Duchess. The colour rushed to her face, as she thought of a dread disease.

"The symptoms in question point to poison," said Dr. Wakefield deliberately.

"Poison?" She stared at him incredulously.

"Were it not that I consider the possibility of such a thing as out of the question, I

should be tempted to believe that Miss Patterdale is now having administered to her, day by day, small, but even so, most dangerous, doses of some form of arsenical poison. What is more, it looked yesterday as if the dose had suddenly been greatly increased."

"What a strange, horrible idea!"

"If it be a fact, which, of course, I do not believe, horrible rather than strange," said the doctor quietly.

He waited a moment, then went on, gravely: "There has always been, and there always will be—human nature being what it is—a great deal of secret poisoning going on. What is more, Duchess, every medical man of my age and standing has probably had to consider the question, as it affects himself as well as a patient, more than once during his professional life. However"—his tone altered; it became cheerful and matter-of-fact—"we know that there can be nothing of the kind going on in this case, and I therefore suggest calling in a specialist who may discover, after a thorough examination of our patient, a comparatively simple explanation of what so puzzles me. Though I do my best to do so, I find it impossible to keep my knowledge, as to the wonderful new medical discoveries which are being made, really up to date."

"I'm afraid she'll refuse to see a specialist."

He said nothing for a moment, then he exclaimed: "I do earnestly beg you to try and persuade her to do so. I do feel seriously uneasy. She nearly slipped through our hands yesterday—"

"I had no idea of that!"

"Such is the fact, and I should like to get Sir Joseph Flintlaw down to-morrow."

After Dr. Wakefield had left her, the Duchess, taking her courage in her hands—for Miss Patterdale was, in her fragile way, very formidable, and always knew her own mind—went and knocked at the door of the stately bedroom which had been assigned to the Duke's kinswoman.

Owing perhaps to the doctor's unexpected confidence, she felt shocked at the old lady's appearance. Was it so that a woman looked, when she was being slowly, secretly done to death by poison? Though there could be no thought of such a dire happening here, the Duchess shuddered inwardly.

"I've come to sit with you," she said gently. "I think Angela ought to go out for a little walk." She was aware that the

girl had been kept a close prisoner since lunch.

Throwing for once a really grateful look at her hostess, Angela Patterdale almost ran past her, out of the room.

"How are you feeling this evening, Cousin Amy?"

And then, as she had hoped would be the case, Miss Patterdale gave her the opportunity she sought.

"I'm sorry to say I feel far less well than when I arrived here. Yesterday I was really *very* ill. And though I know you have a high opinion of him, Laura, I cannot say I like your doctor."

"Dr. Wakefield confesses himself puzzled, Cousin Amy, and so to-morrow we are having down a really great man, Sir Joseph Flintlaw, to hold a consultation."

A look of surprise and displeasure came over the old lady's drawn face, and so the Duchess hurried on, saying the only thing she knew might smooth away that look. "James always begins by asking for news of you during our little morning telephone talk. And I know that it will be a *great* relief to him for you to see a specialist."

Miss Patterdale's face softened. "The Duke is very kind," she said feebly. Then she lay back and closed her eyes. Suddenly she opened them again.

"There is no necessity for you to stay here, Laura. I feel sleepy. If I want anything I will ring for the housemaid to give it to me. I ought to have told Angela not to be out for more than half an hour."

"I'm walking into the town, so if I meet her I'll tell her that you would like her to be in by half-past six," she glanced at the clock, which was just going to strike the hour.

What a terrible tyranny is the tyranny of age! The Duchess, in her secret heart, hoped that she would not meet the girl with whom she, as she put it to herself, so longed to get "on terms."

It was as though there were a high, impassable barrier between the two, the kind affectionate hostess and the lonely young visitor. A barrier no doubt caused by the secret love affair which the Duchess felt sure was absorbing all Angela's waking thoughts. The girl never looked at a paper, and rarely opened a book. She was engaged on an elaborate, ugly, piece of needlework, but often she would leave it lying on her lap, and, needle still in hand, gaze into vacancy with such a curious look—was it a watchful or a waiting look?—on her plain face.

Again dismissing poor Angela as an unprofitable subject of speculation, the Duchess, as she walked briskly down the broad carriage drive that led to the gateway and so into the town, told herself that she had managed "Cousin Amy" quite cleverly. In fact she was now actually on her way to tell Dr. Wakefield of her success, so that he could get a call through to the specialist to-day. She hoped he would be at home, though, were he out, she could leave a message with his wife.

But Dr. Wakefield met her at the door of the fine old Georgian house which had belonged to four of his medical forbears, and he took her straight, a little to her surprise, into his consulting-room.

Before she had even had time to sit down, she told him her good news. But he seemed so little pleased, so—so indifferent, that she told herself something must be weighing on his mind—a bad case maybe, to which he was just starting when her coming had stopped him? So she got up.

"Just let me get my hat and stick," he exclaimed. "I should like to walk back with you, Duchess, if you will allow me to do so."

They were some way up the familiar High Street when he said suddenly, "Something has happened, since I saw you, which has altered the problem of Miss Patterdale."

He spoke in a brusque, preoccupied tone, and after they had passed under the Norman archway, it was as though half-consciously he guided her steps up a narrow path which led away from, instead of towards, the Castle. The Duchess felt surprised, more by his manner than by what he had just said.

"Have you guessed what is really wrong with her?"

"I'm afraid what I am going to tell you will give you a great shock—and it's just possible that I've got hold of a mare's nest. But I think not—I fear not."

"Tell me quick—you're frightening me!"

"Hush!"

The word slipped out instinctively.

There had come the sound of footsteps hard by, on the carriage drive, and through a row of evergreen bushes they could see Angela Patterdale walking quickly back on her way to the Castle.

She was wearing a close cap and long ulster, and she looked more like an under-servant than a visitor.

They waited until she was quite out of earshot, and then Dr. Wakefield said in a low voice: "That girl, Duchess, is slowly

but surely doing her aunt to death. Each morning and evening she goes out and secretly meets a man who is stopping at that old 'Fisherman's Rest,' down by the river. He calls himself Captain Ranley, and he must have arrived at the hotel two days after Miss Patterdale and Miss Angela came here. It is this Captain Ranley who is almost certainly providing, day by day, the arsenic which is being administered to Miss Patterdale. The two are, no doubt, convinced that their meetings, which take place in a lonely lane, near the river, are absolutely secret and unsuspected. But they little know what a gossip-ridden place is a little country town like ours."

"How have you learnt all this?" asked the Duchess.

She spoke in a quiet, collected tone; but she was feeling sick with horror, and, for the first time in her life, for she was a brave woman, consciously terrified.

"In quite a simple way! But first let me assure you that the worst of what I have told you is still unsuspected by anybody, and will, I hope, remain so."

She felt greatly relieved, and he went on: "One of the children of the man who keeps 'The Fisherman's Rest' has measles, and I went down to see the little chap, who is rather bad, on leaving you this afternoon. The moment I arrived the child's mother mysteriously took me off into a bedroom which I could see was in the occupation of a man. She unlocked a ramshackle-looking drawer with a key she took out of her pocket, and in that drawer showed me a small brass-bound box. This also, to my surprise, she unlocked. In it were a considerable number of—well, I hardly know what to call them! Let's say tiny packets. I recognised the pale blue paper in which each was wrapped as that commonly used by Italian chemists. The woman confessed, with some agitation, that she and her husband had given the powder contained in one of these packets to a cat, with the result to the poor creature that you can imagine! She wanted my advice as to what they ought to do—whether they ought to go to the police? The husband, who is a prudent sort, thinks it no business of theirs. The more so that this Captain Ranley is a pleasant-spoken young man, and generous with his money. The woman mentioned, as an afterthought, that he is a friend of one of the young ladies staying at the Castle, and she told

me, tittering, that they met daily, secretly, by the river."

"I told her I would think the matter over," went on Dr. Wakefield, "and of course I pointed out to her that Captain Ranley might possess the stuff, whatever it may be, for some quite innocent purpose. I also suggested that if they desired me to do so, I would speak to the gentleman myself, and so clear up what may after all be no mystery, and she said she would consult her husband."

"How horrible!" murmured the Duchess. "And what do you think can be done?" she asked, feeling for once quite helpless.

For a time her companion remained silent. Then at last he answered, and she felt the hesitation in his mind, rather than in his voice.

"I think you will agree that our first thought must be to save that unhappy girl from the awful consequences of her wickedness. On the other hand, the matter is so very serious that we ought, if possible, to find out something about this man Ranley, if, indeed, Ranley is really his name. You know our local Police Inspector, Eartham?"

"Of course I do."

"I think the best thing to do would be to take him, to a *certain limited extent*, into our confidence. I suggest he should be told, as from you, Duchess, what I suspect will be no news to him, that one of your young lady visitors, a cousin of the Duke's, is engaged in a secret love affair with a man who you fear is an adventurer. Ask him to communicate with Scotland Yard, and find out if anything is known of this Captain Ranley. Tell him frankly what a help it would be to you in dealing with the matter if the man is as much of a rogue as you believe him to be."

Seeing how greatly she was disturbed and distressed, he added: "I will undertake to speak to Eartham if you will authorise me to do so. He will probably get a call through to London to-night, and I will tell him that if he has anything to say he can let me know the result, and I will then ask if I may speak to you on the telephone."

Late that same evening the Duchess received the message she longed yet feared to hear.

"It is the man's real name," were the cautious words, "and someone is coming down from town to see you concerning his past career to-morrow."

There followed for the Duchess a sleep-

less night. She lived over and over again every moment she had spent with Angela Patterdale, since the awful, to her, almost incredible, revelation. The girl had looked exceptionally composed, it might almost be said exceptionally happy, all the evening. She had also talked more than usual, and had appeared quite animated, as well as quite unsuspecting of the change which had come over her hostess.

The Duchess seldom thought of herself as possessed of exceptional privileges, but as she waited for the man whom in her own mind she designated "the gentleman from Scotland Yard," she did vaguely realise that there were advantages attached to her position as the wife of a great Duke. What she did not realise was how very much her own radiance of nature and kindness of disposition helped her over the rough places of life. Inspector Eartham would not have taken the trouble he had taken the night before had her Grace been ten times a Duchess, but for the fact that, as he would himself have expressed it, he thought all the world of her.

But alas! the interview on which the Duchess had built so much, though it opened, as she said frankly to herself, very well, proved a disappointment.

"With regard to this Captain Ranley," observed the official, who had been sent down from town to see her, "there is very little to tell, though I may inform your Grace, in confidence of course, that there is one black mark against him. Within a short time of the armistice, and before he had been demobilised, he was charged with having committed bigamy."

"Bigamy!" exclaimed the Duchess.

"Yes, in eight months this man had contracted two marriages. The brother of his second, bigamous wife laid an information against him. But in those days magistrates were lenient to temporary officers, and, as his real wife refused to prosecute, he escaped with a caution."

"Then he's married?" She felt immensely relieved.

"As far as we know he is a widower," was the unexpected answer. "The young woman who refused to give evidence against him died within a few weeks of the case. Here is a newspaper cutting containing a short summary of the Police Court proceedings."

The Duchess glanced at it eagerly. "The magistrate was less shocked than I should have been," she exclaimed.

"I understand from Inspector Eartham that your Grace has no definite charge against Ranley? The fact that he is secretly engaged to a young lady of good family cannot be regarded as a criminal offence," and a slight smile came over the shrewd face.

For a moment the Duchess felt angry. Then she reminded herself that, after all, the shape this interview was taking was her own fault. She had not breathed a word, and did not intend to breathe a word, of her terrible suspicion.

"How would you feel if this Captain Ranley were meeting your own daughter or sister in secret?" she asked sorely.

The man addressed looked, and felt, ashamed.

"I would move heaven and earth to put an end to such meetings," he said sincerely.

Then looking straight into her troubled face: "Though I doubt if I am justified in allowing the information about this man which I have given your Grace to be so used, I do authorise you to show the young lady the cutting I have just handed you. If the fact that you possess this information about him can be conveyed to Captain Ranley, he'll probably decamp——"

"May I ask Inspector Eartham to see him?"

"To that I fear I must say 'No.' But if I may be allowed to make a suggestion, I think the best thing of all would be for your Grace to see Captain Ranley, if you can bring yourself to do so."

III.

DURING the afternoon that followed the Duchess's interview with the official from Scotland Yard, the moments seemed minutes, and the minutes hours. Dr. Wakefield had insisted on sending in a nurse, to Miss Patterdale's indignation, an indignation shared, oddly enough, by her great-niece. But even in the middle of the unpleasant discussions and "fusses" over the nurse, the Duchess managed to have a talk with the doctor, and together they worked out what seemed to them both the only way out of a dangerous, as well as tragic, dilemma. So it was that at half-past six—having already ordered her motor to be in readiness—she made her way to the pleasant bedroom in which she had last been, to see if everything there was cosy and comfortable for her coming guest, just before that expedition to Scalands, which now seemed to belong to another life.

Angela Patterdale was jamming on her hat with furious haste, for it was already late, and the man she loved with so abject a devotion did not like to be kept waiting. So when there came a knock on the door, a feeling of intense annoyance swept over her. But this changed to surprise when the door was opened by the Duchess, looking so unlike herself that even the unperceptive girl felt a pang of—was it fear?

"I'm just going out, Cousin Laura. I suppose you've just come in?"

"No, I'm going out too. But I've something very important to tell you."

She did not look at Angela. She was staring away from her, wondering how she could put into words the dreadful thing she had come to say.

"A terrible discovery has just been made," she said at last.

"A discovery? How d'you mean, Cousin Laura?"

The girl had taken off her hat. There was a look of defiant anger in her face. But she was far, far from suspecting that she had been—dread words—found out.

"Dr. Wakefield has discovered that your Aunt Amy is being poisoned. Two days ago, had it not been for a certain precaution the doctor thought it right to take," at this she raised her eyes and looked straight into Angela's now pallid, mask-like face, "she would have died in agony."

She waited a moment, then said quietly: "You would have been a free woman, then, Angela, with enough money to indulge not only your own tastes, but the tastes of Captain Ranley, the villain to whom you are, I suppose, secretly engaged."

Angela had grasped the pillar of her four-post bed. Her green eyes were dilated, and in them was an expression of almost animal terror.

"This morning," went on the Duchess, her voice sinking almost to a whisper, "someone came down from Scotland Yard."

And then, as the girl looked about to faint, "Pull yourself together!" she cried. "The man who came here knew nothing about what has been going on, but he told me certain things about Captain Ranley—things which you ought to know."

And then a dreadful suspicion came to her for the first time. "You are not secretly married to him?" she asked. And, as Angela shook her head, "Thank God for that!"

She handed the girl the newspaper cutting in which was set out in formal, colour-

less, but, to unhappy Angela Patterdale, terrible words, a brief record of the Police Court proceedings.

The girl read the short report twice through. And when she saw on Angela's face the awful effect those colourless words could cause, feeling full of pity, the Duchess went up to the wretched girl, and taking the cutting from her nerveless hand, she led her to the writing-table which she herself had taken the trouble to make pretty the day of Angela's arrival.

"You must write a letter now, at once, to Captain Ranley. Make it as short as you like, but tell him that what has been going on is now known, and that he must not lose a moment to avoid arrest. Put it into your own words, *but remember not to incriminate yourself.*"

Angela sat down at the writing-table. But she made no effort even to take up the pen. She stared before her as though lost in a maze of fear and pain.

"Shall I tell you what to say?"

The girl started. She took the pen in her hand, and looked up, "I—I can't think of anything to say!"

"Put simply this:

"Scotland Yard is on your track. You have the night before you in which to get away. I have been shown the Police Court report of what happened in 1918."

Slowly the girl wrote the words in a round, childish hand. But it was the Duchess who blotted the bit of note-paper, and who, after putting it into an envelope, wrote on it *Private*.

Suddenly she told herself that the official from Scotland Yard had advised more wisely than he knew. If she sent Angela alone to "The Fisherman's Rest," the girl might disappear with this man for whose sake she had so nearly committed murder.

"We are going together to 'The Fisherman's Rest.' If Captain Ranley is there, I will myself give him the letter. If not, you will have to follow him to the place where I suppose you usually meet. We can entrust this note to no one else."

Neither of them spoke during the drive down to what had become of late years a famous riverside hostelry. The Duchess had been to "The Fisherman's Rest" many a time, but she was well aware that this evening's visit would cause a good deal of gossip and speculation in the little town. But that, after all, was a very small price to pay, and Angela Patterdale was not known here.

"Captain Ranley? I think he's in the lounge, your Grace."

It was with intense relief that the Duchess saw that the man she sought was not alone when she came face to face with him. There were two other men, strangers, in the rather stuffy little hall.

"Captain Ranley? I have been asked to give you this."

His handsome face flushed. There came over it a half-smile, as this still attractive-looking woman came up to him.

She did not wait to see the astounding change which came over that same smiling, *débonair*-looking face, when he had torn open the envelope and seen what it contained.

* * * * *

Cousin Amy and her great-niece had been gone for quite a long time; indeed the foundation-stone of the new Scalands Manor had already been well and truly laid; and the Duchess was beginning to feel that the dreadful episode of which she had shared the secret only with Dr. Wakefield had been a dream rather than reality, when one morning something very extraordinary happened. She and the Duke had just enjoyed a cosy little breakfast together in her sitting-room, when the Duke suddenly looked up from a letter which he was reading with some care.

But before he could speak, she threw him an apprehensive look: "That looks like poor Cousin Amy's spidery handwriting, James?"

He smiled a little queerly. "You have guessed right. Let me see? You became quite fond of Angela Patterdale, eh, Laura? What d'you think your pet has gone and done now?"

The Duchess started to her feet with a cry: "Not killed herself?"

"Killed herself? Married herself! I'll show you poor old Cousin Amy's letter in

a minute. With her 'kind hearts' are *not* more 'than coronets'——"

"I quite agree!" exclaimed the Duchess. "But whom has the poor girl married?"

"From what she says, your queer young friend had a secret love affair, some years ago, with the son of a farmer who lives near Scalands. Her indignant aunt sent for the young man's father, and gave him what for. She thought the whole business at an end, but, of course, it was nothing of the kind, and the girl went off and married the youth yesterday."

"Thank God!" the Duchess exclaimed.

He looked at her. "You're easily pleased, I must say."

"Angela was so horribly unhappy, James. She has a far better chance of becoming a good sensible woman married to this farmer's son, who was her first love, after all, than if she had waited for Cousin Amy's death, and married some fortune-hunter."

"Well, well," cried the Duke, "you are always surprising me, Laura! And I suppose you will go on surprising me until——"

"—'Death us do part,' darling?"

And then she got up and went round to where he was sitting.

Putting her arms round his neck, she began to cry. "Don't ask me the reason why," she sobbed. "But I have got a very good reason for being glad that poor girl is married."

"I don't want to know the reason," said the Duke. "Fortunately for myself, I'm a most incurious man. If you're pleased to welcome a farmer's boy—Cousin Amy uses a less pleasing term—into your children's family, I'll not say you nay. But I don't feel we can ask the happy couple here during Cousin Amy's lifetime, eh?"

"If that's the case, then I hope Cousin Amy will live to be a hundred," said the Duchess decidedly.



PESTILENCE AND : FAMINE :

By RALPH DURAND

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

PETER DARRELL, Collector of the Wanzoa District of British Mego-baniland, lived five days' journey from the Commissioner from whom in theory he received his instructions. Their only means of communication was by a steam launch that plied round the shores of Lake Madzikulu to collect the cotton, hides, rubber, beeswax and ivory for which the agents of Brazenbridge's various stores bartered the manufactured goods she brought them. As *The Lady of the Lake* had her living to earn, she could not afford to visit Darrell's end of Lake Madzikulu more than about once a month, and in consequence correspondence between Sir Humphrey Stark and his subordinate was limited to matters not of immediate importance. When an urgent problem arose Darrell had to settle it by the light of his own common sense.

One evening towards the end of the rainy season *The Lady of the Lake* arrived and sent Darrell's mail ashore with a request that his replies to it might be sent to Brazenbridge's stores, three miles farther along the lake shore, by sunrise next morning. Darrell knew that it would take him most of the night to deal with his official correspondence, but he lingered over his evening meal, reading and re-reading a private letter that would be crumpled with much handling before another came to take its place. Then he lighted his pipe, referred to the Commissioner's letter, and began his reply.

"SIR,—

"COTTON.—I have the honour to report that native production of this commodity shows a satisfactory increase."

Darrell always wrote his official letters to the Commissioner in the most grandiose possible language because he knew that they were liable to be printed in Parliamen-

tary Blue Books, although, so far as he was able to learn, nobody but the printer ever read them. He copied out of his note-book all the statistics he had been able to collect as to the amount of cotton that the Wanzoa had sold to Brazenbridge's agent and the price in trade-goods that the agent had paid for it, then he proceeded to his next paragraph.

"COFFEE.—I am not at present in a position to satisfy inquiries that have reached H.M. Government as to the suitability of the climate and soil of this district for the cultivation of this berry. I have the honour to suggest that specimen seeds should be sent me with cultural instructions for experiments."

Darrell then proceeded to answer as fully as he possibly could inquiries originated by people who might in the course of time settle in his district to cultivate tobacco for the European market. He wanted planters to settle in his neighbourhood because, apart from his desire to make the country of some practical use to the Empire, as well as of more use than it was at present to its native inhabitants, he hoped some day to marry the writer of the letter he had read during his evening meal, and at present his only white neighbour was a taciturn Scotchman in charge of Brazenbridge's store. But he was too honest to exaggerate the prospects and he reported that tobacco grew like a weed in his district, but added that, to judge by the smell of the local variety when smoked by natives, it would command no sale in Europe except for purposes of fumigation, and added, "although the local standard rate of wages is low—three shillings worth of trade-goods *per mensem*—the labour supply is unreliable, as the desire to amass a sum sufficient for the purchase of a

wife is the only factor that will induce a man to offer his services for hire."

Having written all he could think of about tobacco, Darrell proceeded to the next subject.

"VACCINATION.—Although small-pox is endemic among the Wanazoa, I do not think that attempts to vaccinate the population would meet with encouraging results, as the operation would probably be regarded as an attempt to bring the subject of it under the magical influence of the operator."

This was written for the eyes of whoever it is that reads Blue Books, as Sir Humphrey Stark knew even more about the superstitious fears of the Central African native than Darrell himself. But Darrell added a paragraph to a covering letter intended for the Commissioner's eyes alone.

"I have a strong idea that if anyone tried to vaccinate one of my people you wouldn't see his tail for dust, but I'm game to tackle the job. I suppose you dip the lancet in the lymph and jab it in the fellow's arm?"

The next subject was one that vitally concerned Darrell's happiness. Sir Humphrey Stark had told him that he could not allow him to bring a wife into the country so long as there was any danger of serious rebellion on the part of the Wanazoa, and that he considered there always would be such danger so long as the Wanazoa possessed firearms. In answer to a direct question, Darrell reported that there were 1,200 flint-lock muskets in his district, that he always confiscated and destroyed any that were used in faction-fights, but that he had not been able to hit on any more wholesale method of disarmament that would not seem to the Wanazoa unjust and tyrannical.

In his covering letter he added: "Wanazoa muskets are really not nearly as deadly as Wanazoa tobacco at any range at which it would be possible to miss a haystack. They are used only for swank—a man who has one would no more leave it behind when he goes visiting than he would leave behind his necklace of lions' claws if he is entitled to wear one—and for making a ghastly row at wedding and harvest dances. Do you think that the Government could be persuaded to buy them and solve the problem that way? The local price is three cows."

"Please thank Lady Stark for the maga-

zines. Have you a book on elementary engineering that you could lend me? Road-making is going on splendidly, as I have a lot of muscular prisoners in quod at the moment to work on it, but the bridges I design have a tendency to collapse in the middle as soon as the scaffold poles are taken away."

By the time his letters were dispatched dawn was breaking. Darrell put on his waterproof—the rain that had poured down all night was dying away in drizzle—and went out into the garden that he had planted to delight the eye of the girl he loved, the girl who was to come out and marry him some day—when the Wanazoa were disarmed. To the critical eye the garden presented rather a back-yard appearance. During four months in the year its chief characteristic was the rankness of the weeds that grew faster than the gardener could cope with them, and for the other eight months it was covered with dust. Its native flowers closed their petals throughout the heat of the day and English flowers would grow only under the shade of tattered mats. Discarded bully-beef tins were the only things that Darrell could find to use for flower-pots. Yet he loved his garden because it seemed to link him with home. But the day when Winifred Neville would walk by his side in it seemed to come no nearer!

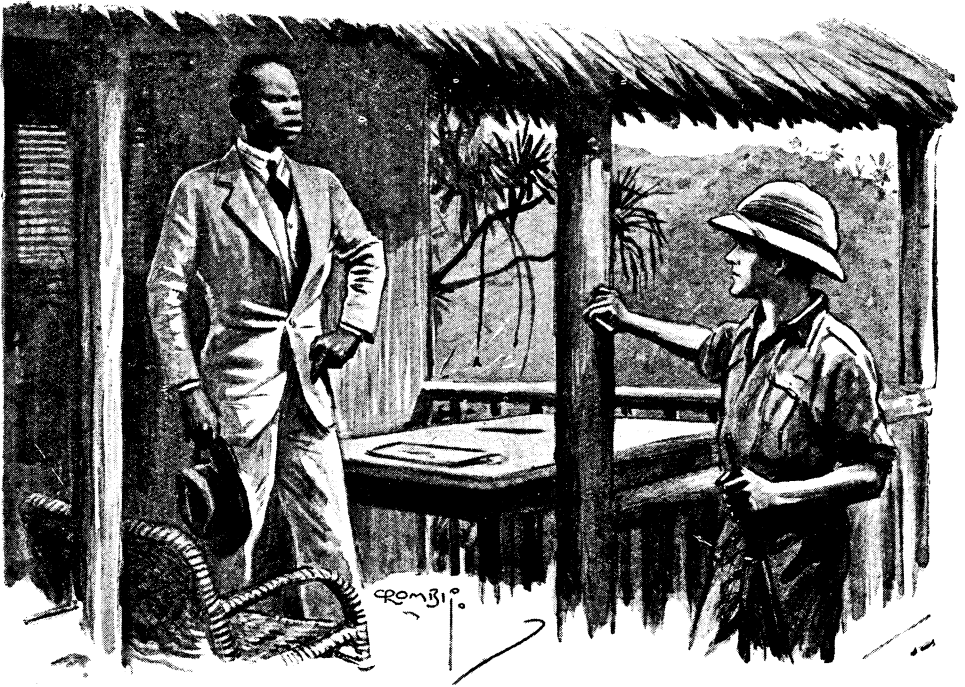
The rains ended abruptly a month before their due time, and Darrell, fearing a food shortage, issued an order that one basket in every ten of all the grain harvested was to be stored in sealed granaries that were not to be opened without his permission. It was not a popular order because the Wanazoa had so much less grain for beer-brewing; but Darrell was the first to suffer, for with less beer-drinking there was less faction-fighting; without faction-fighting there were few prisoners, and without prisoners' labour road-making operations languished.

The next hint of trouble arose when a man came to the *bwalo* and complained that some person unknown had bewitched his cattle. Darrell pocketed a book on *The Management of Live Stock* that the Commissioner had lent him and investigated the complaint on the spot. The oxen he examined were obviously very ill, but the book afforded no clue as to the nature or cure of the disease. It did, however, give practical advice as to methods to be adopted to check the spread of Foot-and-Mouth disease, and Darrell issued a new edict to the effect that any beast exhibiting symptoms similar to

those of the stricken beasts was to be killed outright and burned. The Wanazoa did not obey the latter part of the order quite literally. Many beasts were killed, and for a time there was so much feasting on diseased meat that the scarcity of grain was no great hardship.

Yet Darrell's popularity waned still more. The elders sitting at sunrise at the kraal gates to watch the depleted herds stream out to graze, reminded each other that Darrell had taken no steps to smell out the wizard who had bewitched the cattle. Even those who were most loyal to the new govern-

economy that was, as he confessed in a letter to Winifred, a bit above his weight. The wild game in his district was a national asset, ranking next in importance to the Wanazoa's cattle. Would he be justified in destroying the game that were spreading the rinderpest in the hope of saving what remained of the herds? If he referred the question to the Commissioner a month must elapse before he received an answer. He pondered the matter for three anxious days, then, because it seemed that the game were doomed in any case, whereas a remnant of the cattle might be saved, he decided to act.



"The man was dressed in European clothes, but he was a full-blooded black, and Darrell addressed him brusquely in the Wanazoa language. '*Funani?*' he demanded. 'Sir,' said the negro haughtily, 'I would have you know that I am a Bachelor of Medicine of the University of Aberdeen. . . . My name is Samuel Wilberforce.'"

ment agreed that, though the white man's method of dealing with ordinary malefactors was sound, he was altogether too easy-going in cases of witchcraft.

When reports came in that all kinds of game, from the humble duiker to the lordly buffalo, were dying in hundreds, Darrell knew at least the source of the trouble. For the first time since his appointment he wished that the African Transcontinental Telegraph had actually reached his station instead of being merely projected. The problem that had now arisen involved for its proper solution a knowledge of political

When the Wanazoa hunted on a big scale they built brushwood fences several miles long with gaps at each half-mile, and cunningly concealed pits, into which they drove the game, at each gap. The usual result of a hunt under native management was that ten times as many buck were killed as the hunters could possibly eat. Darrell conscripted labour, organised hunts on a scale hitherto unknown, and saw to it that such of the meat as the beaters did not want was distributed among the villages instead of being left to the vultures. The young men enjoyed the sport and the rest of the

population appreciated the free meat ration. Darrell recovered his popularity. He had long been accustomed as he passed through the villages to be hailed with Names of Praise usually addressed only to paramount chiefs, such as "Hippopotamus," "Earth-shaker," "Terror of Evil-doers"; now "Meat-giving Lord" was added to his other titles.

By the time that the game had become so scarce that it was waste of labour to hunt, another problem, remote at first, began to loom larger every day. The last rains had fallen early in March. It was now August. In the normal course of events no more rain could be expected before November at the earliest. The dry season had still three months to run and the grain reserves that Darrell had ordered to be stored amounted to less than a month's supply. A certain amount of scarcity towards the end of each dry season was usual because the Wanazoa, being improvident folk, wasted in beer-brewing much grain that might have been more economically used. But usually the clearing away of the long grass by bush-fires made game easy to find, so that the "Season of Hunger" was mitigated by hunting. This year hunting would be impossible, as Darrell, wisely or unwisely, had exterminated the game or driven it out of the district. He knew that he could not look to the Commissioner for help, for Sir Humphrey Stark had already sent him orders to buy on behalf of the Government all the grain that the Wanazoa had to spare and send it to Kilibula to relieve expected scarcity at that end of the lake. Darrell had replied that they had none to spare, but it was not till then that he realised the full weight of the problem that confronted him—the problem of how to keep his people alive until the next rainy season.

The Wanazoa foresaw the danger that threatened and petitioned Darrell to wear his waterproof whenever he went out of doors. Too muddle-headed to distinguish between consequences and causes, they, crediting him with magical powers, had supposed that when he wore his waterproof it was to bring the rain down to the earth instead of merely to keep it off his clothes. Darrell declared that he was no rain-maker, that anyone who professed to be able to make rain was an impostor, and that He Who Is The Greatest Of All would send rain when He chose. The deputation listened politely, murmured conventional expres-

sions of agreement with what he said, and when he had finished speaking firmly repeated their request that he should wear his waterproof. Whereupon Darrell lost his temper and said that they had the brains of baboons.

When the result of the petition was known the people murmured, and the official magicians of the tribe welcomed the opportunity to foment sedition. Rain-making, divining, astrology and witch-finding were all separate professions, but just as a general practitioner in more civilised countries may practise both medicine and surgery, so among the Wanazoa all four arts were often practised by one individual. Darrell had done his best to discourage rain-making, divining and astrology, to the detriment of the practitioner's fees, and had made witch-finding an offence punishable by months of hard labour at road-making. Consequently the magicians hated him and predicted that a curse would afflict the country so long as he ruled over it. The general public asked why, if this were the case, the magicians did not use their arts to kill him. The magicians cited the failure of their own efforts to make rain as proof that he could control evil spirits that were stronger than their own beneficent magic. Darrell, in consequence, won an enhanced reputation for supernatural powers that in the crisis that was impending was of more practical value to him than the popularity he had again lost.

August dragged out its weary length and September brought the first heat of Central African summer. Though the sun, a great copper-red disc, was half hidden all day by the smoke-haze of a hundred bush-fires, from an hour after its rising naked rock was too hot to touch with the bare hand. What grass the bush-fires spared was shrivelled up and turned to powder by the hot wind that howled all day among the hills. The gaping earth of the abandoned cornfields became iron-hard.

Darrell, knowing that hunger is stronger than fear of the Law, had all the grain that he had caused to be sealed up brought under armed guards to his own *boma*, and gathered all children, women with unweaned babies, and people too old to shift for themselves, into a concentration camp near his headquarters. To these a scanty ration was issued daily, but the able-bodied were told that they must feed themselves as best they could. Darrell tried to hearten them by reminding them that there were still fish to be netted in the dwindling pools of the

river-beds, mice to be snared, wild honey to be found in hollow trees, white ants to be dug out of their nests. The people listened without the usual conventional murmurs of assent, and when he had finished speaking, shouted despairingly, "Give us rain, Great One! Give us rain!"

One day Darrell, who had been up long before dawn to superintend the issue of grain in the concentration camp, had tramped twenty miles to shoot a rhinoceros of which word had been brought him, and had stayed by the carcase to see the meat fairly distributed as far as it could go, came back to the *boma* to find a woolly-headed negro seated in his chair on the *bwalo* dais. The man was dressed in European clothes, but he was a full-blooded black, and Darrell addressed him brusquely in the Wanazoa language.

"*Funani*?" he demanded.

"Sir," said the negro haughtily, "I would have you know that I am a Bachelor of Medicine of the University of Aberdeen. I have just arrived from Kilibula in a rotten little lake-steamer. My name is Samuel Wilberforce."

"Sorry," said Darrell, dropping wearily into the chair that Wilberforce had vacated. "What can I do for you?"

"You will find my credentials, I imagine," said the negro, "among your correspondence."

Only two envelopes lay on the *bwalo* table. Darrell put aside the one that bore an English post-mark to enjoy when his mind was calmer. The other—Sir Humphrey Stark, too, was a busy man in those days—contained only a pencilled scrawl on a half-sheet of foolscap.

"DEAR DARRELL,—

"Herewith one of a batch of West Indian medical students consigned to me from home. Some idiot in Downing Street has had a brain wave and hit on the idea that the inhabitants of Megobaniland will submit to vaccination more readily from one of their own colour. I don't suppose your Wanazoa will. I'm afraid you'll have to make the experiment, but try and return Wilberforce in due course in an undamaged condition.

"Downing Street has chartered a steamer to bring us grain from India, but I doubt if it will arrive in time to be of much use. The new railway has not yet reached to more than a hundred and fifty miles from the coast. Brazenbridge is pushing it on as fast as he can and is organising relays

of porters to travel night and day with the grain, when it arrives, from railhead to Kilibula. You shall have your share when it comes. Till then, do your best."

"I hope I shall be able to persuade my people to let you vaccinate them," said Darrell, "especially as, owing, I suppose, to the famine, there is more small-pox about than I have ever known before. But I don't know how on earth to set about the job. My people are so confoundedly superstitious. They think that a man who can get hold of a hair from another chap's head, or something of that kind, can do the chap all sorts of harm by art magic, and I'm afraid that they'll suspect you of evil motives of the same kind when they find that you want to jab a little knife into them."

"I hope to reassure them by explaining through my interpreter the nature of the operation."

"The crab to that is that these people are such born liars themselves that it's difficult to make them believe the truth when they hear it, especially from a bl—I mean from a man of their own colour."

"In Jamaica, and even at home," said Samuel Wilberforce pompously, "I have encountered the prejudice of ignorant people who despise me because I am not of the same colour as themselves. But I did not expect to experience it from—"

Darrell had as much regard for a black man's feelings as he had for his own, but he was too utterly weary to pick and choose his words and it was imperative that Wilberforce should be made to understand the position.

"I know. It's deplorable," he said. "And now you'll be up against the prejudice of ignorant people who will despise you because you are of the same colour as themselves. Besides, my people simply don't begin to understand anything in the way of philanthropy or altruistic motives. If we tell them you have come to vaccinate them for nothing and solely for their own good, they'll think they smell a rat and wonder all the more what kind of dirty trick you are up to."

Samuel Wilberforce would have argued the point, but the temptation to demonstrate his superior education was irresistible.

"*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*," he quoted glibly.

"I—eh—I suppose so," said Darrell lamely. He had so completely forgotten all the Latin he had ever learned that he had

no notion at all of the meaning of the quotation.

"Surely," suggested the negro, "the vital importance of vaccination would warrant you in making it compulsory?"

"I have an armed force of twelve King's African Riflemen," said Darrell, "all at the moment sufficiently occupied in guarding food reserves. In addition to them there is in each village a man who acts as a sort of unpaid policeman in return for the honour and glory of being allowed to wear a brass armet. What sort of success could I hope for if I tried to ram vaccination down the throats of a whole tribe of people scared stiff at the mere idea of it?" He rose from his chair. "I'll think it over and decide what is best to be done. Meanwhile, you want somewhere to sleep. I'll tell one of the Riflemen to find men to carry your kit over to the nearest village and see that the headman there cleans out the best hut for you."

The suggestion put the negro on his dignity again.

"I am a Government official," he protested, "and I consider myself entitled to be lodged in Government quarters. If you have no spare bedroom in your house, I would be content to sleep in some other room, but I owe it to my position to insist on being properly housed. I am an educated man, and——"

Darrell, weak with weariness and hunger, dropped into his chair again. "You have every right to resent what I am going to say, but I've got to say it. You may be an educated man—in fact, I know you are—but you aren't a white man. I can't treat you as a social equal, because if I did it would lower my prestige in the eyes of the Wanazoa. I wouldn't care two pins for that on my own account, but my prestige is about all I have to go on in governing them. Making a people like the Wanazoa toe the line is a white man's job, and Downing Street ought to have had more sense than to send you here."

Under no circumstances whatever should a man speak disrespectfully of his superior officers, but Darrell, worn out with anxiety and the weight of his responsibilities, would have been hardly human if he had shown no sign of resentment at the new load that had been thrust upon him. He forgot his insubordinate remark as soon as he had made it. A time was coming when he was to learn that Samuel Wilberforce had taken more note of it.

There is in England a school of politicians whose creed it is that their own country is invariably in the wrong, that their own Government is dishonest, untruthful and inspired by self-interested motives, and that those whose duty it is to uphold the honour of the flag in remote parts of the Empire are brutal tyrants. While studying medicine in England, Samuel Wilberforce had come into contact with members of this school and had swallowed their doctrines whole. One of his political friends, on hearing that he had obtained an appointment in Megobaniland, had invited him to send home full and fearless accounts of how the country under Sir Humphrey Stark's care was misgoverned. That very night before he went to bed the negro began the first of those letters. He said that Darrell, a man apparently of little education, had, by exhibiting ignorant colour-prejudice, demonstrated his unfitness to govern a coloured people, and had proved his utter indifference to their welfare by actually putting obstacles in the way of the medical officer appointed to the district by the Administration. After writing so much of the letter Wilberforce—though there were rats in the hut assigned to him—went happily to sleep. But Darrell lay broad awake till dawn, racking his brains with the problem of how to persuade the Wanazoa to allow themselves to be vaccinated.

He sent for Wilberforce to the *bwalo* next morning and made him sit below the dais on which his own chair was placed.

"I have hit on an idea," he said. "It happens that at the moment my people hate me like a poison because they think that I could stop the drought if I chose. Now if I invite them to be vaccinated at no cost to themselves they will think that it is another dirty trick that I am going to play on them, whereas if I seem to try and oppose their being vaccinated there is just a chance that they will want to have it done. The first thing to do is to let them know what you are here for, and I have arranged for that. At dawn this morning I sent out messengers—not my own Riflemen, who have been trained to carry out orders smartly, but men from the nearest village—to tell all the chiefs and headmen that the Great White King has sent a man to give the Wanazoa the white man's magic against small-pox, but that I shall allow it to be given only to my Riflemen, to Matipa, the paramount chief, to the minor chiefs, and to the people of such villages as have had clean conduct-sheets for a full year. I have said that the

ceremony is to take place three days from now. The messengers won't hurry themselves. They will stop to gossip at every village they pass, and within a couple of days, if we have luck, every one in the country will be discussing how to lie convincingly enough and wangle hard enough to get himself vaccinated."

"My instructions are," said Wilberforce pompously, "to vaccinate everyone, not merely those whom you wish to reward or with whom you wish to curry favour."

Darrell had to restrain himself from replying in a manner that would have relieved his feelings. His position had so accustomed him to at least outward deference that the negro's scarcely veiled insult was hard to tolerate.

"I want you to vaccinate everyone so far as it can be managed," he said, "but it's got to be done in my way or you won't get anyone to vaccinate at all. What I'm hoping is that every one who knows that he can't prove that he has committed no offence and has given no trouble during the past year will come to you behind my back and try and square you to vaccinate him. You will do it, of course. But don't do it for nothing. They don't understand philanthropic motives, and anything that they don't understand scares them."

"My instructions were explicit on that point," said Wilberforce. "Under no circumstances whatever am I allowed to charge a fee."

Darrell's temper began to rise.

"I wish that whoever it was that gave you your orders had come with you to see you carry them out!" he said. "What you don't seem able to understand is that you must take your instructions from me. You can go back to your quarters now. You won't be wanted for three days, and I've got a lot of things to do."

Wilberforce went back to his quarters and added several more sheets to the letter he was writing to his political friend. Darrell took his field-glasses and went to a hill-top to watch the course of a swarm of locusts that had appeared on the horizon. If by good luck it came to earth within a mile or so of his *boma*, he could turn out the old people and children, with every basket they could find to fill with the insects that the drought had converted from a curse to an eagerly sought blessing. He calculated that two hours' vigorous locust-catching—if the swarm alighted for so long—should save two days' rations of grain.

For the same reason that Parliamentary debates and the proceedings of the Law Courts are open to the English public, Darrell's *bwalo* was open to all who chose to come to it when he had business of public interest. On the day appointed for the vaccination of the chiefs the *bwalo* was so crowded that there was scarcely standing-room except for a small space kept clear by the Riflemen immediately in front of the dais on which Darrell sat. In times of normal prosperity the babel and talk when the *bwalo* was crowded was so great that the Riflemen had to come to the court provided with long slender rods with which to rap the heads of the noisiest whenever Darrell particularly wished to make himself heard. Now there was a melancholy silence. Famine had taken all the heart out of the gaunt, hollow-eyed people. Darrell scarcely needed to raise his voice at all as he formally opened the proceedings.

"Listen, Matipa, and you, chiefs, headmen, and people of the Wanazoa! It has pleased the Great White King to send you the white man's magic against small-pox. It shall be given to all chiefs and headmen, but because many of you have given me much trouble it shall not be given to such as have wantonly broken my laws. I have spoken." He turned to Wilberforce. "That old fellow sitting in the centre of the ring on the carved stool is Matipa. Vaccinate him first. He is the paramount chief."

Matipa eyed the lancet uneasily. It was not pain he feared—the African is curiously callous to pain. His chest was deeply furrowed with ornamental scars the cutting of which he had borne without flinching. It was the uncanniness of the unknown that upset him.

"There is no need to vaccinate that man," said Wilberforce. "Any qualified medical man could see at a glance that he has already had small-pox."

"If you don't vaccinate the paramount chief none of his people will let you vaccinate them," said Darrell sharply. He snatched the lancet from Wilberforce's hand and scratched the paramount chief's arm. "By this magic, Matipa," he said, "when next the small-pox comes to your village it shall pass you by. Now look here, Wilberforce! It you don't do as you are told without argument, a file of Riflemen shall march you away to work with the prison gang."

"This is gross tyranny. I shall report it. I am a Bachelor of——"

"Report anything you dashed well please.

Vaccinate the Riflemen next while I call the roll of the minor chiefs."

Wilberforce sulked but obeyed. The Riflemen, being already inoculated with the white man's magic that is called Discipline, underwent the operation without any

pox is in the next village to mine and their hearts are cold for fear of it."

"Less than two months ago the pigs of your village were allowed to stray in the manioc gardens of your neighbours, so that a *mandu* was



"A shout rose from the crowd. 'Give us rain! Give us rain!' Then all rose and, still shouting, filed out of the *boma*."

qualms. The first of the chiefs to be called, seeing that it had no visible evil effect on them, offered his arm for vaccination and then approached Darrell.

"*Baba!* Grandfather! Earth-shaker! May not my people too have the magic that the Great White King has sent? The small-

brought against you. I do not love those who give me trouble."

"Those pigs have now been eaten because of the famine in the land," pleaded the chief.

Darrell pretended partially to relent.

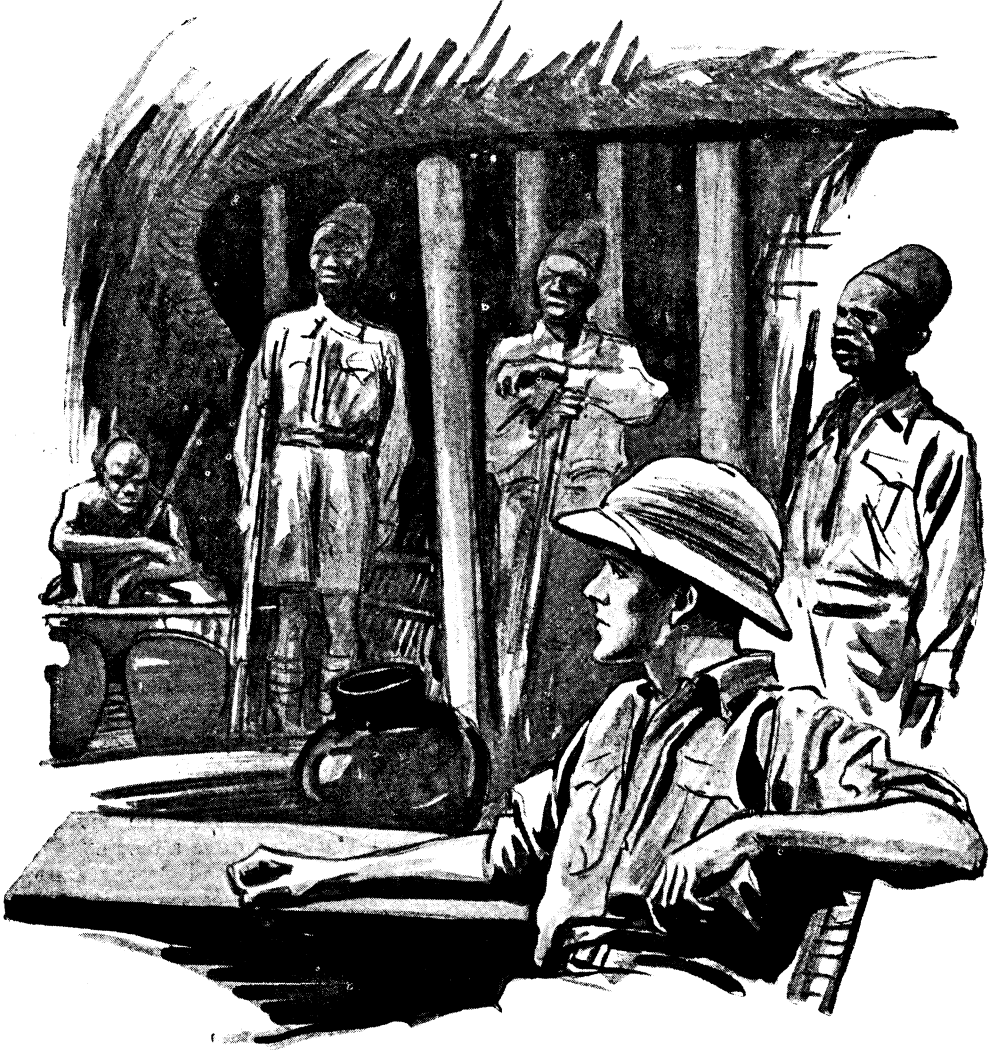
"One half of your people shall have the magic against small-pox. The sins of the

village shall be on the other half. I have spoken."

The chief went off delighted to sort out his own people from the crowd and another chief stepped forward to plead for his people. Throughout the rest of the day Darrell listened to many lies told in condonation of

several who were trying to get vaccinated on false pretences. Darrell commended the man's intelligence but contrived soon afterwards to find an errand for this too-zealous member of his bodyguard.

His stratagem had succeeded so much better than he had expected that a violent



"It was futile to curse Wilberforce. The harm that was done was done. Presently Darrell pulled himself together."

past lapses from virtue, but, though he challenged the lies, he always made pretence of relenting whenever the queue of people waiting to be vaccinated dwindled. It gave him great satisfaction to note that the queue contained many people who had got into it without his authority. One of the Riflemen noticed the same thing and drove away

temptation assailed him. Enfeebled by famine though they were, every man in the crowd who possessed a flint-lock musket had brought that cumbrous symbol of pomp with him. Darrell coveted those muskets more than he coveted any material thing in the world. If he made those who possessed them surrender them as the price of

vaccination the main problem of his administration would be solved; the happiness for which he had worked so hard and waited so long might be his; Winifred Neville might come to share his life and delight in the garden that he had made for her. A score of times he asked himself whether it would be justifiable to make the owners of muskets surrender them in return for a privilege that he was anxious to give freely to all. He was too much worried to consider the question from every standpoint, but somehow it seemed that though it might be justifiable it would not be just. With a heavy heart, because he loved justice more than expediency, he decided not to take the opportunity that their distress had given him to disarm his people.

On the following morning he stayed in the *bwalo* only long enough to supply Wilberforce with enough candidates for vaccination to keep him busy for the next hour, and then went off to take stock of what grain remained. Some of the children were growing so woefully thin that he wanted to consider whether he could increase the daily food ration. He found that he dare not increase it and went back to the *bwalo* leaden-hearted with despair.

When he got there no vaccination was in progress. Wilberforce had given way to the craving that all men of his race, savage or civilised, have for making speeches, and Darrell was just in time to hear his peroration, "—and I tell you that I will not leave this country till I have vaccinated everyone, rich or poor, no matter what obstacles the Collector may try to put in my way."

Darrell beckoned to his sergeant and pointed to Wilberforce's interpreter.

"Take that man away," he said. "Do not put him with the other prisoners because he has done no wrong, but see that he is kept away from the black man whose mouth he is." Then he turned savagely to Wilberforce. "Stop talking and get on with your job."

But the assembled Wanazoa gave Wilberforce no opportunity to get on with his job. They gathered into loudly chattering groups, that split up and reassembled into fresh groups, and presently a spokesman approached the dais.

"Listen, *baba*," he said. "We have talked and we have found that we are of two minds. Some say that you love us; others say that you have ground us under your heel. Some say that there has been peace in the land since you came to rule

over us; others say that you have come here to turn our strength to water, since you will not let our young warriors raid the cattle of the Akapolo, as was our custom before you came. When our cattle were bewitched, why did you not let our witch-doctors smell out the wizard who bewitched them, so that we might slay him? Why did you make us drive the game out of the country, so that now we starve? Why will you not wear the coat that brings rain, that we may live and not die? What is this magic that the Great White King has sent us? You say it is magic against small-pox. Some of us say that it is magic to make slaves of men already weak with hunger. Listen, *baba*, for these words have been put into my mouth to say: If you will give us rain we shall know that your heart is good, and we will let the Great White King's messenger give us the magic. But if you will not give us rain we will not have the magic. I have spoken. Give us rain, *baba*!"

A shout rose from the crowd. "Give us rain! Give us rain!" Then all rose and, still shouting, filed out of the *boma*.

It was futile to curse Wilberforce. The harm that was done was done. Presently Darrell pulled himself together.

"After all, it's the children who matter most," he said, "and fortunately they won't run away from where their grub is. You'll have to work in the concentration camp now, Mr. Wilberforce. Vaccinate the kids when they line up in a queue for their rations. The Riflemen shall hold them for you if necessary. I'll let you have your interpreter back. You can't do any more harm than you have done already."

When Wilberforce had gone, Darrell remained sitting in the deserted *bwalo*, unable to decide to which of all the many things that needed his attention to devote himself. He felt disinclined to do anything. A sense of utter failure in all he had done and hoped to do for the Wanazoa weighed him down. His limbs, too, felt as heavy as lead. He was physically, as well as mentally, a sick man. Often during the last few days rack-ing headache, nausea, and cold shivers down his spine had warned him that malaria had him in its grip. He had told himself that he must not be ill and had fought against the fever with large doses of quinine and sheer will-power. Now he no longer had heart to fight against it.

For days the sun had been hidden, not by smoke-haze, but by lowering clouds, such

clouds as often in the fiercest drought gather to mock the hopes of men and then give place once more to brazen skies. The heat was stifling. Not a leaf on the trees stirred. The concentration camp across the valley looked like a camp of the dead, for all had sought relief from the sun in the darkness of the huts.

Suddenly the sense of burning heat left Darrell's cheeks. His teeth began to chatter with cold. He knew that to fight the fever he ought to go to bed and pile on all the bedclothes he possessed. But first he must give his sergeant orders. With a great effort of will he roused himself, went indoors, and, for the sake the warmth it would give him, put on the waterproof that had hung untouched on its hook since seven months—it seemed seven years—ago. Then, helping himself with a stick, he staggered out of the *boma* to find the sergeant.

* * * * *

The men who had refused to be vaccinated went no farther than a village within view of Darrell's *boma*. There they sat down to talk. Presently they sent a man to lure Wilberforce and his interpreter into a hut under pretence of hearing at greater length what he had to say about the magic he had brought them. When he came they tied his arms and legs together and explained to him that they wished to ascertain, by an infallible method known to them, whether he was a wizard who sought to bewitch them to their undoing, or whether his heart was pure and his magic white magic. They offered him a bowlful of water in which they had soaked the bark of the *mwabvi* tree and told him that he could prove his innocence by drinking it. If his heart was pure he would vomit the concoction, but if his heart was evil it would kill him.

Wilberforce talked at great length—but he did not accept the invitation that from the Wanazoa point of view was so eminently fair-minded and reasonable. By Wanazoa custom a man undergoing trial by ordeal must drink of his own free will—but it is allowable to help him make up his mind by applying hot coals to the soles of his feet. They were just removing his boots for the purpose, cutting the leather with knives because they did not understand boot-laces, when a shout arose from outside that the white man had, at last, yielded to the entreaties of his people and put on his rain-making coat.

The conductors of the Trial by Ordeal rushed out into the open to see if the good

news were true. As they stood and stared, sudden as a blow, a cold wind arose, ruffling the surface of the lake and chilling their sweat-damped shoulders, and hard behind the wind, a month before its time, came the first of the rains.

For two nights and days the rain poured down like a waterspout. Through it butted *The Lady of the Lake*, carrying Sir Humphrey Stark and towing two barges loaded to the hatches with imported food. When it reached the shore below Darrell's *boma* the Commissioner found no one to greet him. He ploughed his way uphill through mud that was already green with new grass, and went first to the concentration camp, where the sergeant of Riflemen was superintending the distribution of food.

"Our *baba* is sick," said the sergeant. "He gave no order before the sickness closed his mouth as to the feeding of the children, therefore am I giving them food as before."

The Commissioner nodded approval. The sergeant's words had told him much: that Darrell had taken the right steps to cope with the famine, and also that he had trained his Riflemen so well that they could, when necessary, act on their own initiative.

In the mud just inside the gate of the *boma* lay a great pile of flint-lock muskets, and as Sir Humphrey paused to make an estimate of their number five more were added to the heap.

"By whose order are these brought?" asked Sir Humphrey.

"There was no order," said one of the men who had brought a musket. "But it is fitting that we should bring gifts to our *baba* because he brought the rain. We are poor people because many of our cattle are dead; therefore there was nothing else to give."

"Take comfort," said the Commissioner. "I have brought much food."

In the *bwalo* Samuel Wilberforce was busy vaccinating men who had brought in muskets. He gave a polysyllabic account of Darrell's illness, but stated that he was now out of danger. Sir Humphrey went into the house and found Darrell, hollow-eyed, thin, pitifully weak, but cool-skinned and in his right mind.

"I've brought you food," said the Commissioner.

"And seed?" asked Darrell eagerly. "Seed for sowing? That's what's worrying me now."

"Stop worrying, then. You are now going

to be carried aboard the launch, and you are going to come back with me, and you are not to worry your head about anything at all till Lady Stark has fattened you up a bit. You've been killing yourself with

overwork, and as I can't afford to lose my best man, the first thing we'll do when we get to Kilibula is to wire to that girl of yours to come out from home and look after you."

A further episode in the career of Peter Darrell will appear in the next number.



MIDSUMMER.

LO, Belovèd, here I bring you
 Roses from my summer garden.
 All the air is summer-scented,
 Summer-scented all your raiment.
 Summer breezes play about you,
 Tangle all your hair with kisses.
 Earth beneath your least fleet foot-fall
 Thrills with love ; all heaven's mirrored
 In your sunny eyes' deep azure,
 Clear and tranquil as the limpid
 Crystal-cool delicious brookways
 Flowing over clean smooth pebbles
 In and out the meadow-iris
 All the length of this green England.
 So you stand there, Rose of roses,
 Waiting for me, sweetly silent,
 While a white rose trails to kiss you,
 And the perfumed honeysuckle
 Lovingly just o'er your shoulder
 Drops a light spray, falling, straying,
 All caressing, and just touching
 Where your bosom's snowy whiteness
 Heaves so tranquil 'neath the lacework
 Of your dainty girlish raiment.
 So I bring you, Rose of roses,
 Roses from my summer garden,
 Sweetest flowers for the sweetest
 Light on earth, our English girlhood.
 And I bend my footsteps theeward,
 Reverential, full of gladness,
 All the love of earth within me,
 Sky, blue sky, white clouds and jasmine,
 And in my heart for ever ringing
 All the songs of all the lovers !

E. B. W. CHAPPELOW.

LAWN-TENNIS IN FOREIGN CLIMATES

AND THEIR EFFECTS UPON

◦ ◦ A PLAYER'S GAME ◦ ◦

By MRS. L. A. GODFREE

(KATHLEEN McKANE)

LADY CHAMPION

WHO would not travel were he or she given the opportunity? Yet the opportunity, at any rate for travel on any considerable scale, rarely comes to us. How fortunate, then, are the present-day lawn-tennis players, who travel and see many parts of the world to which they are called by the enthusiastic interest which is taken in the game in practically every country!

I have taken part in many lawn-tennis trips, and always I have met with the most wonderful hospitality. Kindness and consideration that are beyond words have been shown to me, and I know that all who have travelled abroad for the game will join with me in saying that it is indeed a wonderful experience.

This is not only because of the sense of comradeship between fellow-sportsmen. Certainly it is a great thing that the people of different nations should be brought together, by their common enthusiasm for a game, in a friendly and sporting spirit. But there is more than this. There is the extra necessity for keeping fit, in conditions where the constantly changing climate would otherwise undermine your health. There is the tonic effect of having repeatedly to cope with new conditions of play and its result in greater accuracy and control of the ball through meeting fresh players with different strokes, different styles, different tactics. All this gives a fillip to your game and helps to take you out of the groove in which a monotonous round of home tournaments would probably place you. The attraction of playing lawn-tennis in foreign

climes lies in having to tackle and overcome new difficulties, to the undoubted improvement of your game. There is, moreover, the knowledge that in coping with these difficulties you are upholding the name of England abroad. Surely that is an incentive to our young boys and girls to become really good players?

All who have travelled abroad to compete in any form of athletics will agree with me, I am sure, that it is very much more difficult to produce your best form when away from home. Lawn-tennis players are certainly no exception to this rule, and there are many instances of extraordinary lapses from form on the part of famous players when playing away from their own countries. There are many good reasons for this.

First and foremost, the difference in conditions creates a feeling of strangeness, and this feeling of strangeness leads to lack of concentration. If you have played in any important match in front of a huge crowd, you will appreciate both the necessity and the difficulty of concentration. It is always important, but how much more so when one is abroad! To me it is the greatest difficulty produced by a foreign court. At every turn there seems to be something to take my mind off the game. Not only am I flustered by the strange surroundings, but I get a feeling of loneliness and desertion on the court. I know many other players who suffer from the same unhappy sensation.

The officials who manage the tournaments and matches abroad are extraordinarily

competent and courteous, but naturally they have their own methods which do not entirely coincide with ours. To these our minds have to be adjusted. Some of these foreign ideas and methods, of course, are rather nice. For instance, during the Wightman Cup matches in the U.S.A., the challenge cup is filled with beautiful flowers and placed in a prominent position where all can see it and where it is ready to be presented at the close of play to the captain of the winning team. The same pleasant idea is carried out at the finals of the Women's National Championships, when the winners and the runners-up are handed their respective trophies on the court—a little celebration which makes a very nice finish to a most enjoyable week. I would commend this idea to those who organise our own championships.

But to those of us who are temporarily "foreigners" the customs abroad are not all so pleasant as these. As you step on to a foreign court, facing a crowd of on-lookers whom you do not know, your confidence is shaken. The lawn-tennis spectators abroad are wonderfully appreciative and always do what they can to encourage the players; but they will demonstrate their enthusiasm by some method that is unknown and strange to you, and the expectation of this will give you a feeling of uncertainty.

I remember playing in an important match abroad a few years ago, when the umpire was a Briton who could not speak the foreign language. Consequently he called the score in English. The spectators were unable to understand how the match was progressing and they started to shout their disapproval. I quite sympathised with them, but on the other hand the demonstration was very awkward and disturbing. To quieten them, one of the officials repeated the score in their own language through a megaphone after each point had been called. This had the desired effect, as far as the audience was concerned, but to me it added to the distraction. It was my first experience of the sort, my concentration went completely, and this proved my undoing. My opponent, on the other hand, was of the same nationality as the spectators, and she played better than usual during the disturbance—I suppose because the obvious interest taken by her own people in the match gave her confidence.

At home, you know what to expect from your own people, before whom you have played many times, and concentration is

therefore easy. Abroad—well, practice makes perfect: the more you travel, the sooner you accustom yourself to playing amidst strange surroundings, and the easier concentration becomes.

Apart from this feeling of unusualness, the practical difficulties with which you have to cope in playing abroad consist in the variety of court surfaces, of balls, of backgrounds, and of light. In England we play on grass courts during our so-called hot weather, and reserve our hard-court play for the colder months. Many countries, however, have no grass courts, because it is too hot for the grass to thrive. In these places even the hard courts become very hard and dry, with the result that play on them is very much faster and more tiring than anything that we experience in England. After playing all the "summer" in this country on damp grass courts where you have positively to dig the ball out of the mud, the change to sun-baked hard courts, although very pleasant, is at first a little difficult.

In Canada, where they play mostly on hard courts because the long cold winter would ruin the turf, the game is not unlike ours, because of the similarity of the summer climates. But in South Africa or on the Riviera the hard courts are tremendously fast and, to a new-comer, very difficult to cope with. Most of the South African courts are made of ant-heap, which gives a beautiful foothold and a very true surface: indeed, I have never played on anything finer.

In the United States, there are many grass-court clubs, the most important of them being at Forest Hills, just outside New York. The three centre courts here, enclosed by a huge stand, are very good, but quite different in play from the centre court, for example, at Wimbledon: the very much coarser grass seems to alter the bounce of the ball, and it is often slippery. Even on a perfectly dry, hot day you will see players at Forest Hills wearing steel points to counteract the slipperiness, which is believed to result from the intense humidity of the atmosphere.

The variation in balls in different countries, and the effect of that variation on play, is considerable. Each country adopts the make of ball which is considered best to suit its own climate and conditions. But all lawn-tennis balls are affected by high temperature: they become much more lively, fly more quickly through the air,

and bounce very high. Some idea of what this means may be gathered from the fact that in Johannesburg, which stands 6,000 feet above sea-level and is intensely hot about Christmas-time, I have seen an ordinary lob bounce right over a ten-foot stop netting!

back over the net a fraction of a second sooner. To get into the way of these adaptations is at first very difficult, but once you have mastered the art of taking the ball quickly off the ground, you will find that your game is very much faster and more effective.

The make of ball used in the United States is very lively, and when I first played with it it seemed almost impossible to keep it in the court. But here again the only solution of the difficulty is to take the ball early on the rise and hit hard, and after a few weeks' practice I got into the way of playing with this particular ball, and then I found that I could play a faster game on grass than I had ever played before.

Another difference between play at home and abroad lies in the service. Abroad, the service has been developed to a marked degree: some services are terrifically fast, while others have an enormous amount of spin without any loss of accuracy. While watching some of the events in the Men's

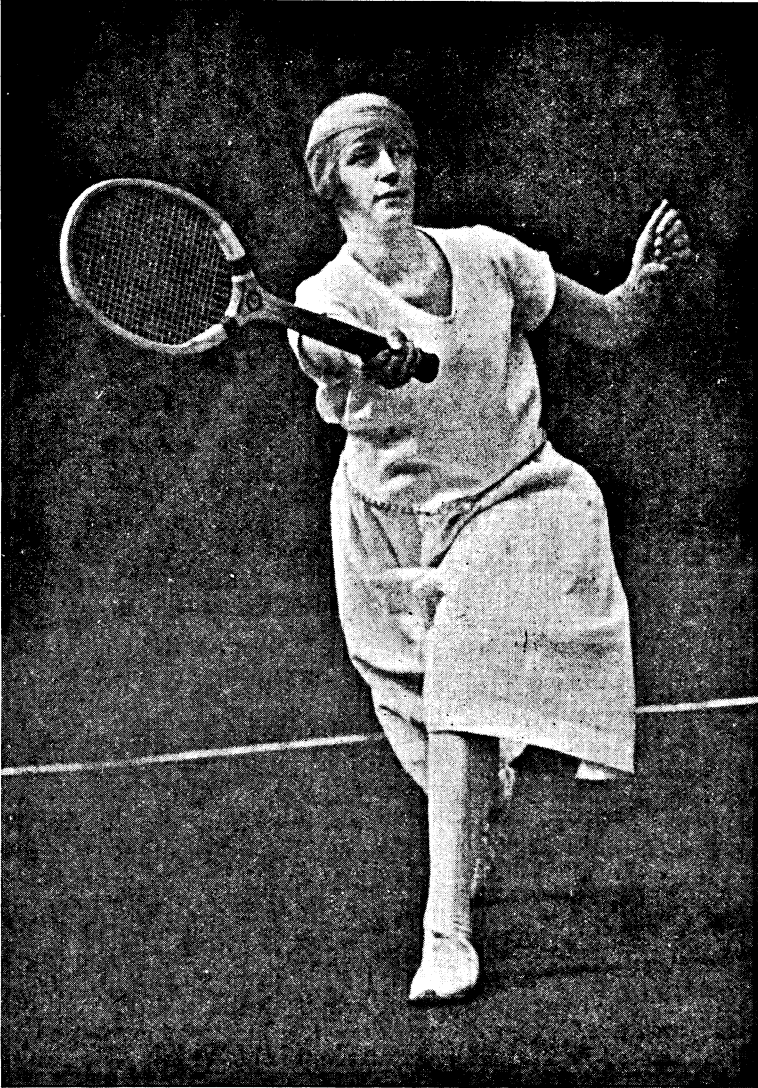


Photo by]

MRS. L. A. GODFREE (KATHLEEN MCKANE), LADY CHAMPION.

[Percy G. Luck.]

The player on foreign courts has to adapt his play to the changed action of the ball. Instead of playing a ground-stroke, as the average English player would do, at the top of the bounce, you have to take the ball very much earlier: and this, of course, will make the game faster, for the ball will be

National Doubles Championships, held at Boston, Mass., I was amazed at the pace of the services, not only among the first-class players, but in the game of nearly every competitor, there being many quite untakeable services and yet very few double-faults. In England, we are certainly not up to this

standard. Why, I cannot say: it may be the climate, or it may be lack of example.

Anyone who starts playing lawn-tennis abroad will at first be handicapped by the unusually brilliant light—unusual, that is, compared with what we are accustomed to in England. On the Riviera our English eyes are absolutely dazzled, for, apart from the bright sunlight, most of the buildings are white, and since some of the courts are of a light sand colour with the lines marked out in dead white, it is extraordinarily difficult, when the sun is beating down, to see the ball. A peak or a peaked cap lined with green, of course, is very helpful under these conditions.

Both on the Riviera and in South Africa I have found special difficulty in overhead play. The atmosphere is so clear compared with that of this country that for quite a while you find yourself thinking that the ball is nearer to you than is actually the case, and consequently you misjudge the timing of your shots.

Not only do changes in climate affect your game at lawn-tennis but they usually affect the health also. Many of the countries which lawn-tennis players visit have much warmer weather than anything which we experience in England. Paris, for instance, is not very far away, yet in Paris a heat-wave means much greater heat than in London. New York and places in South Africa such as Durban and Pietermaritzburg suffer from a very humid, damp heat, which saps all the energy out of you. Often the barometer will not register a higher reading than that in London, yet owing to the intense humidity of the air one will simply bathe in perspiration. Once while I was playing at Forest Hills, New York, I lost five pounds in weight during a single match! This sounds quite incredible, I know, but I can vouch for it, since I weighed myself.

In New York and South Africa, owing to these exhausting weather conditions, it is the custom to have a ten minutes' interval after the first three sets of a five-set match or after the second set of a three-set match. Players who are not used to this idea do not always like stopping in the middle of a match, however exhausting it may be, as they find that the interval spoils their concentration. Personally, however, I am only too thankful in these climates to have the short breather, especially if I happen to be playing during a heat-wave. It is most refreshing to change shoes and stockings and

to sip tea with sugar and lemon in it. I can remember playing one or two matches in America which I should have lost through sheer exhaustion, had it not been for this ten minutes' rest. Those of you who have never played out of England may find it difficult to appreciate the need of such an interval, for in our weather it is unnecessary; but in America and South Africa, it is indeed welcome!

Under these conditions, strenuous exercise is of course very exhausting. You are never hungry, but always thirsty; and it is often difficult to know what to drink. Alcohol is out of the question until after sundown, and too much orange or lemon juice is not considered good. Tea is not cool enough, and, in most countries abroad, plain water is not safe. Hence the difficulty. I think the only solution is to go in for a variety of drinks and to hope that one will counteract the other.

So much for the difficulties of the English player abroad. But what of the foreigner who comes to play in England?

During the Wimbledon meeting, which this year will take place from June 20 to July 2, we have the pleasure of welcoming many foreign players. They compete in the championships and help to make our tournament the most attractive of all sporting events.

Some of these players are the greatest in the world; yet when playing at Wimbledon they do not always do themselves full justice. Why is this? The centre court at Wimbledon should offer perfect conditions for concentration. The surroundings are ideal because the many thousand spectators are cast into shadow by the covered stand and the players do not feel too conscious of them. I do not believe that better conditions for playing lawn-tennis than those at Wimbledon can anywhere be found. And yet, although we have there seen some of the finest lawn-tennis ever played, it is undeniable that foreign players are not always "at home" on the court.

There is, of course, first of all, the inevitable nervousness of players on their first appearance in that huge arena. Again, as with the English player abroad, there is the difficulty of the change in climate. Few players are so versatile and fit that they can immediately adapt both themselves and their play to the new conditions. Many of these players, moreover, come from countries that have no grass courts, and the short

visit to Wimbledon is their sole experience of the grass-court game.

The arrangements at Wimbledon are excellent, and I do not think that a better run tournament nor more ideal conditions for playing can be found in the world. Nevertheless, to the visitor from abroad all seems strange. Our climate, too, is colder than that to which they are accustomed, and they cannot get quickly warmed up at the beginning of a match. The crowd of spectators, also, is unusually large, and this at first must be bewildering.

Of all the first-class players who, in one year or another, have visited Wimbledon, I think only Mr. Tilden and Mlle. Lenglen have shown during their first visit of what they are capable. Both these players have the most perfect control of the ball, and this enabled them very quickly to adapt their strokes to the new conditions. Mr. Tilden won the championship at his first attempt, in 1920, and again in 1921. Since then we have not had the pleasure of seeing him at Wimbledon, but if all goes well he will be there this year and his reappearance will be welcomed by his many admirers. Mlle. Lenglen had never played on grass before when she first appeared at Wimbledon in 1919, and yet she adapted her game so wonderfully that she was able to wrest the championship from the holder, Mrs. Lambert Chambers.

Another famous achievement was accomplished before the War, when Miss May Sutton (now Mrs. Bundy) came over from California unaccompanied by any team and won the championship from Mrs. Lambert Chambers, chiefly by the terrific force of her forehand drive, which was practically untakeable. This splendid feat can be appreciated when it is realised that Miss Sutton had learned her game, not on English grass, but on the fast, hard courts of California.

The young French players, M. Borotra and M. Lacoste, whose fine play has many times delighted the spectators round the centre court at Wimbledon, have improved so rapidly during the past few years that it has been impossible to judge what is their best form. M. Lacoste is now ranked as the greatest player in the world, and there should be a really thrilling match if he and Mr. Tilden should meet this year. M. Borotra, of course, is capable of defeating anyone, and on the centre court at Wimbledon, where he is always the delight of the vast crowd, he always seems very much at home.

But there are many other players—Messrs. Johnston, Anderson, Richards, Alonzo and Washer, and among the ladies Miss Helen Wills, Mrs. Mallory and others—who have found the greatest difficulty in playing their best at Wimbledon on their first visit. Mr. Johnston, of course, playing the most beautiful lawn-tennis, has since won the championship—but he was not successful on his first visit to this country. The Spanish champion, Señor Manoel Alonzo, has never played his best at Wimbledon, although we have had glimpses of the brilliance of which he is capable. And M. Washer, who in his native Belgium can serve an almost untakeable ball and play a forehand drive of terrific speed, has found the grass courts of Wimbledon very unsuited to his game.

Miss Helen Wills has so far only once given us the pleasure of seeing her at Wimbledon, and on that occasion she did not play within half-fifteen of her true form. Miss Wills is a very hard and accurate hitter, and when playing against her in the United States I found that she could keep up this pace right through a long three-set match. When I played against her at Wimbledon, I found that her ground-strokes were not so consistent, and I think that the difference in balls and in court surface from those to which she was accustomed upset the timing of her drives. It is interesting to note that on the two occasions on which we played one another in England I was successful, while on the four occasions when we played in America, Miss Wills was the winner.

Mrs. Mallory is another player of note whose performances at Wimbledon have never done her justice. Except for her match against Miss Fry last year, when she just got home in the third set, I have never seen her produce anything approaching the game she can play in the United States.

On the occasion of the first Wightman Cup match, held at Forest Hills in 1923, the British team was defeated by seven matches to nil. The second contest took place the following year at Wimbledon, and the British team won by six matches to one! These results were not very encouraging, and it looked as if international matches for ladies would not be a success. However, in 1925 the British team were triumphant in spite of the fact that the match was played in America, winning the cup by four matches to three. And last year, at Wimbledon, the U.S.A. team

regained the cup, winning in their turn by four matches to three. This seems to show that after a little experience of foreign conditions, most players can learn to adapt their game.

That is the point of consolation which players making their first trip abroad must remember. Never mind if the results are a little disheartening: look forward to next

year! And meanwhile, not only is there the enjoyment of seeing new countries under ideal conditions, but your game will be improved by the lessons learnt from new experiences: and this will more than make up for the difficulties that have to be met and overcome—difficulties that have a parallel whenever work or play under strange conditions is attempted.



THE VIEW FROM THE WRITER'S STUDY.

HOW often in my tangled room
Have I sat watching, pen in rest,
The long hill purpling into gloom,
The ancient woodland of the Coombe,
Against the sundown in the West.

Upon the verge of London town
Than this there is no wilder view,
No trees in winter-time more brown,
No greener flush on any down
In April, nor a sky more blue.

There stand three poplars on my hill,
And past them in the evening light
I see Don Quixote riding still,
Squired by his Sancho, slowly, till
Those dear romantics merge in night.

Beyond the setting of the sun
They journey. Surely, O my view,
When your trees fall song shall be done,
And my poor pen will cease to run,
And the long Darkness will ensue.

VICTOR PLARR.

MR. DUMPHRY DOES NOT LIVE BY SCHEDULE

◉ By BARRY PAIN ◉

◉ ILLUSTRATED BY WILL LENDON ◉

“THE tulips in Hyde Park this year are spoken of very highly in the newspapers,” said Mr. Dumphy, as he carved the Sunday sirloin. “One writer calls them ‘the children of the sun’—a pretty thought, to my mind. Slightly on the hard side, I fear, and Kenton should be spoken to about it.”

(The last sentence applied to the beef, not to the tulips. Mr. Kenton supplied the beef.)

“Of course,” Mr. Dumphy continued, “in Hyde Park they have exceptional facilities. Rightly or wrongly, I am told that if any bulb goes blind, or does not grow the correct height, it is turned out, and its place supplied from a reserve grown in pots. This must give perfect regularity. At the same time I am not sure that it is quite cricket.”

“No,” said Queenie. “Sounds more like gardening.”

“Yes, but you see what I mean. It is almost a point of honour that if you put in a bulb you take what comes up, whether you like it or not. You are not given a second chance. If, as seems probable, Hyde Park has a second chance, then it is not competing with such men as Pierce Eveleigh and myself on even terms. Still, the result seems to be so beautiful that I think I shall run up to town for an hour this afternoon and have a look at it. The horse-radish sauce is excellent. Anybody care to come with me?”

But the society of Queenie and Barbara was much in demand, especially on Saturdays and Sundays, and both the girls were already engaged. Mrs. Dumphy always preferred to spend a quiet Sunday afternoon. This

sounded better than saying that she liked a post-prandial nap on Sundays, but meant the same thing. So Mr. Dumphy, a man of great energy, went up to town alone.

In the Park the tulips were all a-blowing. So also were the orators by the Marble Arch. But Mr. Dumphy gave his attention to the tulips first. No doubt he was actuated by a love of beauty, but there was also another idea lurking at the back of his head.

Pierce Eveleigh grew some tulips, and so also did Dumphy. This year Pierce's tulips were indisputably better than Ernest's, and Pierce had already alluded to the fact two or three times in conversation. It rankled. The next time Pierce approached the subject, Ernest proposed to talk about the Hyde Park tulips. In comparison with their glory, profusion, and magnificence, Pierce's little lot would be as a dropped teaspoon to a full-sized Alpine avalanche. And that would teach him. Mr. Dumphy made a few pencil notes in the course of his inspection.

Mr. Dumphy now had time to turn to the orators. The particular orator to whom he turned was an elderly gentleman whose white hair was very much longer than it should have been. He also wore a pointed beard.

But this man was a spellbinder. He had been born like that. The whole of his gifts went into it. He did not shout, as most of his neighbouring orators did, but his voice carried and got the stuff over every time. He spoke from a small platform to which was appended a notice that he represented the Rational Life Association.

He did not flatter his hearers. He called them fools, imbeciles, numskulls, fatheads,

one-eyed cockroaches, and used various other terms of invective and contempt. Apparently his audience enjoyed it. They smiled in a shy, foolish way when he launched some particularly devastating term at them. The whole truth is that the man was a spell-binder. He was one of the few who are gifted with that special ability. He could talk to people and he could make it work. His platform was quite well attended and Mr. Dumphy recognised that many of them were not there for the first time.

"I am speaking," said the venerable gentleman, "to those who live the ordinary life." He tapped his massive forehead. "There is something here," he said, "which would prevent them from living the ordinary life. They have got it and they make no use of it. Well, you've got to use it. If you just listen to me I'll show you how to double your happiness, improve your health, get on to an income three times higher than you are earning now. No special secret of mine. What I ask you to do is to live the rational life, to make some use of your think-box instead of leaving it out of action for twelve hours a day. If you don't want the money, you fatheads, then get out. Go and listen to the noisy gentleman on my right hand. He'll just about suit you. He's never done any thinking in his life and he'll show you how to do the same."

He proceeded to analyse and to lash the ordinary life. He spoke of men whose only form of exercise was to bash a football referee, and who never did that unless they had enough blockheads to support them to prevent any accusation of courage. He spoke of the folly of betting.

"You don't know what's going to win the two-thirty," he said. "The owner don't know, the trainer don't know, the jockey don't know, and the horse don't know, and if he did he wouldn't tell you. You don't bet—you just make a small contribution to the bookmaker."

He said that they fooled away their time, they had no knowledge of the classics, they had no appreciation of the arts. There were chances open to them everywhere in London and they did nothing. They were a set of purblind stoats and they knew nothing, they learned nothing, and they never would learn anything. And probably there was not one of them who would not be better, happier, and more prosperous if he would only use such brains as he had got.

"You waste your time," he declared.

"I don't need to tell you so. You know it. Any man who is not up, washed, and dressed by seven in the morning ought to be taken out and shot. I myself was up at six this morning and reading *Sartor Resartus* for the third time. Look down your day, find out those holes where time runs to waste, and fill them up with something better, something that will do you good. We must begin at the beginning."

And already Mr. Ernest Dumphy was much impressed. This man spoke like an educated man. It might and should have occurred to Mr. Dumphy that for a man who commanded the sources of wealth this orator might have been wealthy enough to buy himself a frock-coat somewhat less seedy than that which he was at present exhibiting. But this did not occur to Mr. Dumphy. He was already hypnotised.

"Begin at the beginning," said the orator firmly. "Make out your time schedule. Make it out for every day in the week with twenty-four squares representing the twenty-four hours of each day. Don't be in too much of a hurry. Fill in slowly as you go along. Time? What is it?"

The last question suggested to Mr. Dumphy that he should look at his watch, which he did and found that he would have to hurry somewhat to catch his homeward train. He hurried.

But all the way home the shabby orator was still holding him. He could see now that he was simply fooling away his life. The schedule would have to begin and he would have to live by it. He had a brain. Why not use it?

The first intimation his family received was at breakfast the next day.

"The priceless treasures of literature," said Mr. Dumphy, "are within the grasp of all of us and yet we neglect them. I have on my shelves the complete works of Sir Walter Scott and those of George Eliot. I wonder how often any volume of them is taken down from the shelves."

"I think I can tell you that," said Mrs. Dumphy brightly. "Every book in this house is taken down and dusted twice a year, spring and autumn."

This ought to have satisfied Mr. Dumphy. If you possess the classics and take them down and dust them twice a year, that is all that should be asked of you. But Mr. Dumphy was not satisfied.

"I find," he said, "that six days a week I fool away an hour of my time, half an hour in going up to town and half an hour

in coming back. That is going to stop absolutely. In future that time will be devoted to works of classical literature, such as Keats, or to works of a definitely instructional and informative character."

He put his horrible threat into execution on the following morning.

He got through his morning paper at the house before starting for the station. But he left it with the regretful conviction that there were things in it which he ought to have read and that he had not read them. The literature which he took with him into

felt nearly certain now that it was not the gigantic and murderous-looking negro who had really murdered the piano-tuner, but that it was the meek and quiet little postman. He presumed he could settle that question during the hour, one to two, which would be scheduled "Luncheon." He took the book out to luncheon with him and returned at 3.15, which was regrettable, but assured himself that the guilty man was in reality the dark-browed detective engaged on the case. Again Mr. Dumphry's iron will asserted itself. He did not so much as



"To-day he had resumed strenuous physical exercises before breakfast."

the train consisted of a library copy of *The Crime of the Eight Roads* by A. Paton Whiffle, and a very small book, his own property, entitled *French as the French Speak It*. He decided to begin on the novel and as soon as he found that bored him, to change over to the special French.

When he reached the terminus the conductor came up to him and said, more in sorrow than in anger, "All chinge." Mr. Dumphry closed the novel rapidly, noted that the carriage had emptied, said "Dear me!" and got out.

It is greatly to his credit that he never opened the book in those hours from ten to one which were due to business. He

open the book until he was in the train for his return journey, and even then he went only three stations beyond his objective.

He had to wait twenty minutes for a train back. He found his household extremely agitated. He admitted frankly what had happened.

"Mind you," he said, "the book's rubbish. I had not read two pages of it before I found that out. Still, I had just to see if my solution of the mystery was the correct one, and so I read on. Stupid mistake. It mustn't occur again."

After dinner, which was too late for any schedule, Mr. Dumphry said he would just pick that book up again and get it off his

mind. He then found that he had left it behind in the train. He was annoyed. It was a library book and would have to be replaced.

Seeing a copy of *The Crime of the Eight Roads* on the bookstall at the station next morning, he bought it. He would have to buy it sometime, and he wanted to see if there was, as to which there was no doubt in his own mind, sufficient evidence to hang the detective. He finished the book before reaching the terminus. The detective had not murdered the piano-tuner. The piano-tuner had committed suicide. And considering their profession it is remarkable that more of them do not do it.

Mr. Dumphy found that there was not very much for him to do that morning at the office. This gave him leisure to reflect on his present efforts to guide his life by the light of reason alone. Was he succeeding?

Truth compelled him to admit that he was not. There had been one hopeful feature. To-day he had resumed strenuous physical exercises before breakfast. For weeks he had neglected them simply because they had come to bore him stiff. His brain told him contemptuously that he might as well say that his morning bath bored him stiff, and Dumphy had meekly obeyed his brain and overcome his laziness. Loud applause.

But what about his decision to read classical or educational works in the train? It was true he had carried *French as the French Speak It* up with him. But the information it contained did not soak through the coat pocket and become absorbed into the system. It was necessary to read the book and he had not even opened it. The one thing he had read was a trashy novel which had led him into error. Disgraceful!

And he could see where his mistake had been. The venerable orator had instructed him to begin at the beginning—first to make his schedule and then to live by it. He had not done this. Spasmodic and ill-considered efforts were bound to fail. There must be a schedule. He must begin upon it at once.

He therefore summoned to his presence a young clerk with a very serious expression.

"I wish you," said Mr. Dumphy, "to procure a sheet of thin white cardboard with a good writing surface, and to cut from it eight cards the size of this envelope. Seven of these cards are to be headed with

the days of the week, and each is to be divided into twenty-four squares ruled out in red ink. The eighth card is to be left blank. Do it at once and as neatly as you can. You understand?"

"Perfectly, sir. I can go out to get the white card?"

"Of course. Of course."

It is doubtful whether the first establishment which the young clerk visited really stocked white cardboard. But a small Bass was pushed across the counter to him, and he seemed to know what to do with it. He found the white card at another place, and then having first finished his cigarette he returned to bondage. He was a quick worker and very neat and accurate. Before Mr. Dumphy went out to lunch he had the cards spread out on his table before him, and expressed his approval of them. He gathered them together, put an elastic band round them, and placed them in his note-case which they fitted perfectly. He felt good. He had taken the first sound step towards the rational life. The one blank card was reserved for Admitted Exceptions, for the lynx-eyed Dumphy foresaw there would be some. On the very next day, for instance, he was to lunch with old Harker, and he might not be back before three-fifteen—a rare occasion but one for which due allowance must be made. Mr. Dumphy was going to make his brain his guide in life; he was going to live strictly by schedule; but he was not going to be pedantic and narrow. Oh, dear, no—nothing of that sort!

To-day he left for luncheon as the clock struck one and was back again as the clock struck two. This was as perfectly schedule as could be, and gave him satisfaction. And during his luncheon he came to several decisions.

First and foremost, there would have to be a rough copy of the schedule. Nothing would go down on the neat and final cards until it had been duly tried and tested. Then the question of classification was to be considered. For instance, was dancing to be classed as social amusement or as exercise? On warm evenings he had certainly felt it to be exercise. And how many times round the studio dancing would be the equivalent of one mile walking? He would put the problem to Barbara, who had an almost morbid taste for mathematics. In a fortnight the rough draft should be tested and completed, and ready to be copied on the cards. He had already made one or

two notes for it in his pocket-book. Under Admitted Exceptions was written :

"1. On one day in any month the luncheon hour may be disregarded altogether.

"2. If on any other day the luncheon hour should be exceeded, the excess must be made up from subsequent luncheon hours."

Nothing pedantic there. Kindness coupled with firmness, that was what it was. Mr. Dumphy looked forward eagerly to the new life when his brain would direct his every action and inclinations and weaknesses would be powerless before the schedule.

Suffused with the glow of virtue he was no sooner seated in his evening train than he took out *French as the French Speak It* and studied assiduously for the five minutes before he fell asleep. However, he did better in the up train next morning; the study of French lasted the whole journey.

As the hour of luncheon approached, he became conscious that he was hungry. He was to lunch with Harker, a man who thoroughly understood the subject, and the prospect was pleasant. He would largely exceed the luncheon hour, but that did not matter for provision had already been made for it. *Vide* Admitted Exceptions, No. 1. All was well.

In the hall of the Cabinet Club old Harker shook Mr. Dumphy genially by the hand and presented him to another guest, Mr. Tallibut Eden, the managing director of a railway.

"And now," said old Harker, "we're only waiting for Tudill—Charles Tudill. You may have heard of him."

"I've not had the pleasure of meeting him," said Dumphy, "but I've often seen his name in the papers. Barrister, isn't he?"

"That's the man. Making pots of money. He's a member here, and we don't see as much of him as we ought, for he's a glutton for work. Rather a melancholy beggar, but very much knows how to live, and is quite a good sort really. Politically, we're not the same colour, but that don't matter. As far as that goes, I'm an old friend of Tallibut Eden here, but I don't like his trains."

"Ah, they're not bad trains," said Mr. Eden complacently. "And we keep on improving."

And then Charles Tudill joined the group—a big, rather clumsy, rather fat man of fifty, round-faced and clean-shaven, and looking tired and sad.

"Though I've not met you before," said Mr. Dumphy, "I've seen your name in many important cases. And I hope it will never be your duty to cross-examine me."

"I hope not," said Tudill, "but of course one never knows."

"Charles, behave yourself decently," said Harker.

"What's the matter?" said Tudill. "I merely meant that if I ever did cross-examine Mr. Dumphy the discredit would be entirely mine. You should think before you speak. Got anything fit to eat to-day?"

"No," said Harker, grinning. "You think a lot too much about your food and a lot too much about yourself. Let's come on to lunch, shall we?"

"Plain-spoken chap, our host," said Tudill, "but however——"

They passed on to the table reserved for Mr. Harker. Dumphy was seated between his host and Eden. But for some reason it was Charles Tudill who principally interested him.

And as Mr. Dumphy ate the smoked salmon and sipped the Meursault he reflected that here was a chance for him. He was lunching with three men all of whom had been eminently successful. They might possibly tell him how much of the success they owed to a schedule.

And soon the conversation concentrated on railways. Harker had seemed to push it in that direction: Tudill undoubtedly did. Mr. Tallibut Eden spoke at length and with conviction on his special subject. Tudill was clearly much interested. Old Harker put up a sprightly opposition from the point of view of the ticket-holder. It chanced that Mr. Dumphy knew quite a good deal about railways, and his contributions to the conversation were neither ill-informed nor unintelligent. Mr. Eden observed it.

"I can talk to you, Mr. Dumphy," said Eden. "Even when we disagree, you're a reasonable man and you know what you're talking about. But I can't argue with our excellent host. Either he wants the railways to do the impossible, or to do something at about half-cost—which is equally impossible. He's a solicitor and ought to know better."

Mr. Harker smiled placidly. And Mr. Dumphy was distinctly pleased.

Thus encouraged, he soon found an opportunity to introduce his special subject.

"I've been thinking lately," he said, "of making out a schedule by which I could live—nothing pedantic, of course, but the

kind of thing which would tell me precisely what I ought to be doing at any hour of the day. My idea was that at present probably I waste much time or at any rate do not employ it in the most profitable way. Now if one had a series of cards, one for each day in the week, ruled out in squares with the employment for each hour indicated, it seemed to me that would prove rather an illuminating guide. What do you think?"

Harker sipped his glass meditatively.

"If you want to know what I really think—and of course you do," said Harker, "I think the whole thing's perfectly childish."

"It's seldom I agree with Harker," said Mr. Eden, "but I think he's in the right

that a schedule's never useful. As a matter of fact, I run my trains by schedule."

"And they never keep to time," said Mr. Harker.

"That is as it may be. But I shouldn't certainly dream of attempting to run myself by schedule. It would decrease my efficiency."

"Dear me!" said Mr. Dumphy, "it looks as though I were on the wrong track, doesn't it? What do you think about it, Mr. Tudill?"

"I'm afraid," said Tudill, "that I also am in the opposition. It is not my experience that good resolutions are

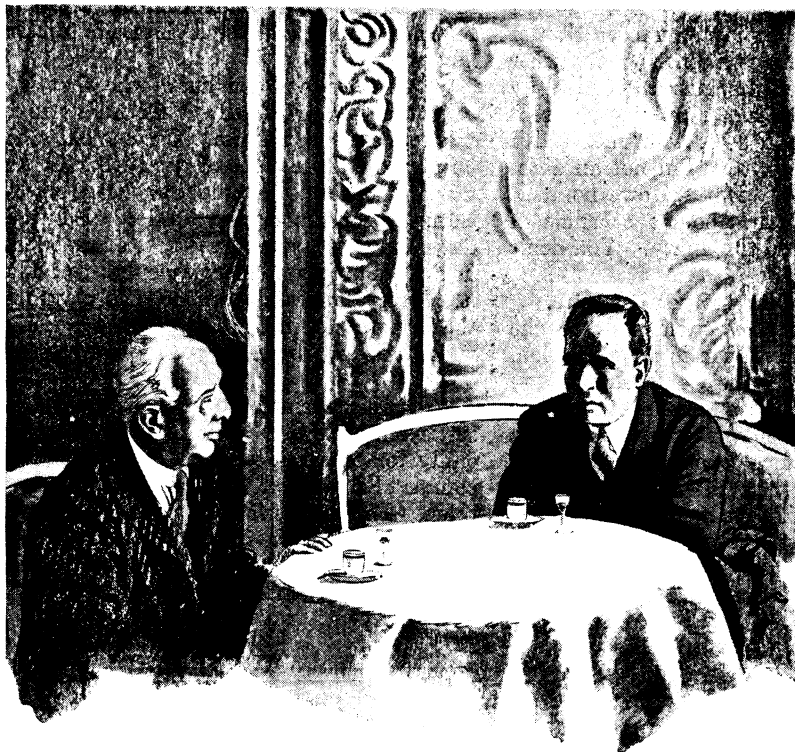


"'You've got a good progressive business, you're a good family man. What more do you want?' 'Well,' said Dumphy, 'I want to get the best out of myself that I can.'"

here. You see, life is elastic. One has to be always altering and accommodating as different things come along. I won't say

much use. The good never need them, and the bad never keep them. It's a subject about which I've thought a good deal.

Several young men have come to me and asked for advice about their careers. I tell them that there isn't any. They may be the kind that will make a career, or the kind that won't. But if they are the kind that won't, then advice won't help them."



"Harker and Eden continued their amicable dispute on the subject of railways."

"In the face of such a body of opinion," said Mr. Dumphry, "I see I must give up my project."

And the talk slid into other subjects.

However, when luncheon was over and they had adjourned to the smoking-room for coffee and old brandy, it chanced that Mr. Dumphry found himself in earnest converse with Charles Tudill, while Harker and Eden continued their amicable dispute on the subject of railways.

"There was a point which rather struck me in what you were saying at lunch, Mr. Tudill," said Dumphry. "You said that the good men did not need good resolutions and the bad men never kept them. No doubt that is so. But, then, how many of us are either good or bad? Most of us are middling. I should certainly describe myself as middling."

"Oh, well," said Tudill. "I don't want

to lay down any hard and fast law. If the middling can get any good out of schedules and stuff of that kind by all means let them. At the same time, Mr. Dumphry, from what our host told me of you before we met, I should not describe you as a middling man

at all. You've got a good progressive business, you're a good family man. What more do you want?"

"Well," said Dumphry, "I want to get the best out of myself that I can."

"Don't worry about that," said Tudill. "You're all right. All this tuppenny-ha'-penny advice and direction for life is based on a misconception. They tell a man to do this and to do the other. Now the thing of supreme importance is

not what a man does but what he is. These rules are dealing with results instead of causes. Ninety-nine times in a hundred if a man does the right thing it is not because he has been advised to do it but because, being the man he is, he actually prefers to do it. There is a friend of mine who is supposed to be rather a blackguard. He is certainly a self-indulgent man, but being what he is he has not got the cold vices. I'm certain he never did anything dishonest in his life. He cannot even tell the ordinary social lie. He is so constituted that he would sooner be taken out and shot than do either. The idea revolts him. You see, it's not what he does, but what he is, as I told you before."

"Then how is it," said Mr. Dumphry, "that so much is written which is intended as a guide to life and insists so strongly

on what we do without touching on the question behind it—what we are?"

"Well, submit it to a practical test. Look at the life of the successful men, the men who really get on. Do any of them use schedules and resolutions and things? No, they're too busy. And they're not self-conscious enough either. Look at the four of us who met to-day at lunch. Harker and Eden are successful men and neither of them has ever attempted to live by schedule. You're a successful man yourself, Mr. Dumphy, so Harker tells me, and I might perhaps claim that I'm not an absolute failure myself. But we owe none of it to the nursery talk about a schedule of life. Give it up, Mr. Dumphy. You don't need it."

And Mr. Tudill lit another cigarette.

When Mr. Dumphy went back to the office he was much shaken in his resolution. At times he felt that he would at any rate give the thing a fair trial, and at other times that money spent on white cardboard of a good writing surface was an unnecessary expense. It was not till he was on the way to the station that final conviction came to him. He observed a slight crowd in the street and went up to it. The first figure he noticed was that of an old gentleman,

extremely inebriated and unsteady in his walk. He had venerable white hair hanging down on his coat collar and Mr. Dumphy had no difficulty whatever in recognising him. There was a policeman on each side of him.

In most London crowds there is a well-informed man and on this occasion the well-informed man addressed himself to Mr. Dumphy.

"Don't suppose you know who that is," said the well-informed. "Grandfather is what we always call him. Curious old chap he is, too. Does a lot of good work in the world, I believe. He makes a little bit by lecturing for the Rational Lifers on Saturdays and Sundays and the rest of the week he's a jobbing gardener when he feels like it. Every now and then he gets overtook the same as at present, but that's a thing which might happen to you or me or anybody."

And this seemed to Mr. Dumphy to settle it absolutely. The night was rather chilly for the time of year and a fire was commanded in Mr. Dumphy's drawing-room. Part of the fuel of that fire consisted of eight cards taken from Mr. Dumphy's note-case. He reserved the elastic band, being a careful man.

THE GARDENS OF LONDON.

[plough-lands,

A STRANGE man came from the
And from a windy down
And gentle rivers, till he heard
The bells of London Town.

In the city the bells rang out,
The folk went to and fro.
"I will go back to the live trees,"
He said, "where the flowers blow.

"For here there is but inquietude,
Neither is beauty seen,
Since the men have not remembered
Their land is paved with green."

There was one man said, "Stay longer
And I will go with you,
And we will walk on Hampstead Heath,
And will go down to Kew;

"To the flowered beds of Hampton—
The fields of Regent's Park,
And over Bushey you shall see
The starlight thread the dark."

So he who came from the plough-lands,
He walked on Hampstead Heath,
And he saw the trees of Richmond
Where a man's soul takes breath;

He heard in Kensington Gardens
The faint sweet pipes of Pan;
Where lovers laugh in the Green Park,
He laughed as lovers can.

And said, "Not only is London
With stone and timber paved,
But men may wander in gardens,
So shall they yet be saved."

MARJORIE WILSON.



"So Borlase went to her aid."

STEADFAST : SAMUEL :

By EDEN PHILLPOTTS

Author of "The Mother," "The Lovers," etc.

◉ ILLUSTRATED BY T. H. ROBINSON ◉

SAMUEL BORLASE was one of them rare childer who see his calling fixed in his little mind from cradlehood. We all know that small boys have big ideas and that they fasten on the business of grown-up people and decide, each according to his fancy, how he be going to help the world's work come he grows up. This child hopes to be a chimney-sweep, and this longs to be a railway porter; scores trust to follow the sea and dozens wish for to be a soldier, or a 'bus-conductor, a gardener, or a road-cleaner, as the ambition takes 'em.

My own grandson much desired to clean the roads, because, as he pointed out, the men ordained for that job do little but play about and smoke and spit and watch the traffic and pass the time of day with one another. He also learned that they got three pounds a week of public money for their fun, and half-holidays of a Saturday, so to his youthful mind it seemed a likely calling.

But most often the ambitions of the human boys be like to change if their parents get much luck in the world, so when you

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see a steadfast creature, like Samuel Borlase, answer the call in his heart almost so soon as he can walk and talk, you feel the rare event worth setting down.

When he was four year old (at any rate, so his mother will take her oath upon) Sam said he'd be a policeman, and at twenty-four year old a policeman he became. What's more, chance ordained that he should follow his high calling in the village where he was born, and though the general opinion is that a lad, who goes into the civil forces, be like to perform better away from his surroundings, where he was just a common object of the country-side with none of the dignities of the law attaching to him, yet in this case it fell out otherwise and Borlase left home to become a policeman and in due course returned, the finished article. Naturally with such a history behind him and the ambition of a lifetime to fall back upon, the authorities found no difficulty with Samuel, because he had a policeman's mind and a policeman's bearing and outlook upon life from his youth up. He thought like a policeman about the mysteries of existence; he regarded his neighbours with a policeman's inquiring eyes, because a policeman has a particular glance, as you'll find if you have much to do with 'em; and he moved like a policeman with the might and mystery of law and order ever before his eyes.

He confessed in later time that he pushed his great theories of perfection rather hard in his earlier years; and he came back to his native village of Thorpe-Michael full of high intentions to lift the place higher than where it already stood. He had an unyielding habit of tidiness and hated to see children playing in a road; and he hated worse to see a motor-car come faster round a corner than it did ought; or any sign of unsteady steps in a man or woman, who'd stopped too long at the "Queen Anne" public-house, or anything like that. He weren't what you might call an amusing man and he hadn't yet reached the stage to make allowances and keep his weather eye shut when the occasion demanded it; but these high branches of understanding was likely to develop in time, and Inspector Chowne, who ruled over him when these things fell out, always held of Samuel Borlase that the material was there and the man hadn't took up his calling without promising gifts to justify it.

"I'd sooner see him fussy than careless," said Chowne, "because life cures a chap of being fussy, if he's got a brain and a sensible

outlook; but the careless and slack sort go from bad to worse, and I ain't here to keep my constables in order: they be here to strengthen my hands and keep the rest of the people in order."

He didn't judge as Samuel would ever rise to the top of the tree, any more than what he'd done himself; for Chowne was one who had long lost illusions as to a leading place. He'd made a woeful mess of the only murder case that ever happened to him and he well knew that anything like great gifts were denied him. But he saw in Samuel such another as himself and judged that Borlase was born to do his duty in the place to which he had been called, and would run his course and take his pension without any of the fierce light of fame.

Of course, Samuel had his likes and dislikes, and he knew which of the community might be counted to uphold him and which might prove a thorn in his side. In fact, he was acquaint with most everybody, and as happens in every village, where there's game preserves and such-like, the doubtful characters were there; and Thorpe-Michael chancing to lie up a creek near the port of Dartmouth, there was river-rats also—said to do a little in a mild way at smuggling from the Channel Islands—a business long sunk from its old fame. Yet the grandsons of vanished "free-trade" grandfathers were thought to carry on a bit when chance offered.

It was a subject about which there were two opinions, and Billy Forde and others vowed most certain that the law was far too strong to allow of any free-trading nowadays; but, just because Billy and his friends were so sure, the policeman mind of Sam Borlase suspected 'em. He judged it suited Billy's convenience to declare that no such things happened, the more so because Mr. Forde's own father was well known to have broke a preventive officer's arm in his youth and done time for the same.

But a man by the name of Chawner Green it was that caused Samuel the greatest mistrust. He had nought to do with the creek, but lived in his own cottage, a mile out of Thorpe-Michael; and the keepers at the big place by name of Trusham, hard by, declared that Mr. Green was a fearsome poacher and hated the sight of the little man, though never had they caught him red-handed, nor been able to fetch up legal proofs against him.

There was a bit of a complication with Chawner Green, because Inspector Chowne happened to be related to him by marriage.

In fact, Chawner had married the Inspector's sister five-and-twenty year before, and though Mrs. Green was long since dead, the inspector never quarrelled with his brother-in-law and regarded him as a man who had got a worse name in the parish than he deserved. So there it was : the keepers at Trusham always felt that Chowne stood against 'em in their valiant endeavours to catch out Chawner ; while the officer took his stand on the letter of the law and said that he held the balance of justice as became him, but weren't going to believe no tales nor set the law in motion against Mr. Green until the proofs stood before him.

It chanced that the under-keeper at Trusham was but three year older than Samuel Borlase himself and a lifelong friend, so Samuel got influenced and came to view Chawner Green very unfavourable. He found himself in rather a delicate position then, but his simple rule was to do what he thought his duty. To look at, Samuel was a big, hard man, rather on the lean side, with a blue chin and a blue eye, which don't often go together. His brow was a bit low and his brain didn't move far out of his appointed task ; but a country policeman has a lot of time on his hands, and upon his long country beats, while his eyes surveyed the scene, Sam's intellects would turn over affairs and, no doubt, arrive at conclusions about 'em. And his conclusion about Chawner Green was that he must be a devious bird, else he wouldn't be so idle. For Samuel held that a chap of five-and-fifty, and hard as a nut, which Chawner Green was known to be, did ought to do honest work, an occupation never connected in the public mind with Mr. Green.

There'd been a wedding a bit back along and Chawner's daughter had married a respectable shopkeeper at a neighbouring town ; and Samuel Borlase reflected rather gloomily that the small shopkeeper was a fish and poultry merchant—also a seller of game. To his policeman's mind there was a lot more in that than met the eye ; and no doubt the born policeman do see a lot more in everything than what us everyday people may remark. Then, on a lonely beat, one autumn day to the north side of Trusham, there came, like a bolt from the blue, the great event of Sammy's life, not only from a professional standpoint, but also an affair that led to far higher things in the shape of a female.

There was a bit of rough, open land there that gave from the covert edge, with scattered brake-fern and a stream in the midst and a lot of blackthorn scrub round about. A noted place for a woodcock, also a snipe, and a spot from which trespassers were warned very careful. So Samuel took a look over to see that all was quiet, and there, in the midst, he marked a big girl struggling with a sloe-bush ! But, quick though he was, she'd seen him first, and before he could call out and order her back to the road and take her name, she cried out to him :

"Will 'e lend me a hand, Mister Policeman, if you please ? I be caught in thickly sloan tree."

So Borlase went to her aid and he found a basket half full of amazing sloes and a maiden the like of which he never had found afore. A tall piece with flaxen hair and a face so lovely as a picture. Her eyes were bluer than Samuel's and twice so large, and she had a nose a bit tip-tilted and a wonderful mouth, red as a rose and drawn down to the corners in a very fascinating manner. She was sturdy and well rounded, and looked to be a tidy strong girl, and her voice struck the policeman as about the most beautiful sound as he'd heard out of human lips. He saw in half a shake as she weren't in no trouble really, but had just challenged to take the wind out of his sails ; and when she'd got free of the thorns, she thanked him with such a lot of gratitude for rescuing of her that 'twas all he could do to keep his face. A lovely thing sure enough ; and such is the power of beauty that Samuel felt a caution might be sufficient. He was out to fright her, however, and he was terrible interested also, because he'd never seen the maid before and felt a good bit thunderstruck by such a wonder. She disarmed his curiosity without much trouble and the truth decided him to do no more ; because he found she had a way to her that made him powerless as a goose-chick.

"Didn't you see the board ?" he asked ; and she assured him that she had not.

"I'm a stranger in these parts as yet," she said, "and I was by here yesterday and saw these wonderful sloan, so I came to-day with a basket, because my father's very fond of sloe gin, you understand, and I'm going to make him some, if you'll be so kind as to let me keep the berries. I much hope you'll do so, please, young man, and I give you my word solemn and faithful never to come here no more."

Their blue eyes met and 'twas Samuel's that looked down first.

"Who might your father be?" he asked.

"Mr. Chawner Green," she answered. "'Tis this way with us, you see. My sister, that kept house for him, have just married, and so now I be come to take care of father."

"He can take care of himself by all accounts," answered Samuel, but in quite an amiable tone of voice, because the girl's magic and her lovely smile also were already working upon him.

"Can he?" she said. "I never heard of no man that can take care of himself. Can you? Anyway, my father can't. He's as helpless as most other men be without a woman to mind 'em. And I love to be here. I was in service, but this is a lot better than service, and Thorpe-Michael's a dear little place, don't you think?"

Samuel didn't say what he thought of Thorpe-Michael. He'd got a powerful feeling in him that he wanted to know her name, and he asked her to tell him.

"You ain't going to put it down in your policeman's book, are you?" she said. "Because I sinned in ignorance and it would be very ill-convenient if I got in trouble with the police afore I'd been here a fortnight."

"You'll never get in trouble with the police," explained Samuel. "In the first place, Inspector Chowne is related to your father."

"He's my uncle," she answered, "and a dear man."

"And he's a tower of strength," continued Samuel, "and, as for getting in trouble with me, that I can promise you you never will do if you behave."

She looked up at him under her eyelids and felt a flutter at her heart-strings, for if ever there was a case of love at first sight it happened when Chawner Green's younger daughter was caught in the sloan bushes by Sam Borlase. If he liked her voice, she liked his, and if he admired her nice shoulders, she was equally pleased with his great broad ones. Just the old craft of nature over again once more, as happens at every time in the year and turns all seasons into spring.

"I'm called Cicely," she said—"Sis' for shortness. And what be you called?"

"My name's Samuel Borlase," he answered, and she nodded.

"I'll remember," she said.

In five minutes they was walking side by

side to her home, which lay along the policeman's beat; and he carried her basket and talked about local affairs.

He was a bit shaken, however, to know she belonged to Chawner, and wished with all his heart that she had not.

Mr. Green was in his garden when they came along and he struck a tragical attitude and poked fun at 'em, for no man loved a joke better than what he did.

"Already!" he cried. "Have she fallen into evil already, Borlase? Be the sins of the fathers visited on the childer so soon?"

But the girl hastened to explain.

"He's been merciful, dad," she explained. "Mr. Borlase caught me stealing sloe berries for your sloe gin; but I didn't know I was stealing, you see, for I thought they were wild, so he's forgived me and I ban't to hear no more of it this time."

"Then he can come in and have a drop of the last brew," declared Chawner; "but just look round afore he enters and see as no fur nor feathers be about in the house-place to fret him."

Samuel, however, with all his virtues, weren't much a man for a joke, and at another time this speech would have earned a rebuke from him in the name of law and order. But afore Cicely, and in sound of her voice, he felt amazed to find law and order sink into the background for a minute, though for a minute only, of course.

He explained he was on duty and mustn't have no refreshment just then; but such is the power of passion that he loitered a full sixty seconds after he'd set down Cicely's basket.

"You come in and taste my sloe gin another day, then," said Green, who knew Samuel was in the other camp with the game-keepers and liked the thought of pulling his leg; but the surprise was Chawner's then, for instead of a short answer, Samuel thanked him as mild as milk, vowed that to his way of thinking sloe gin couldn't be beat and said he'd certainly accept the invitation and come for a drop. Nor did he leave it doubtful when he would come. He acted very crafty indeed and invited Chawner to name the time and hour; on hearing which the girl showed so much interest as he did himself and named the time and hour for him.

"Fetch in to tea o' Sunday, Mr. Borlase," she said. "I make father put on his black 'Sundays' of an afternoon, and I'll see he's to home."

Then Sam went his way, and when he

was gone Cicely praised him for a very understanding chap.

"The sloan in them thickets be a joy," she said, "and if you'll buy the gin, I'll get the fruit. And I dare say he'll catch me there again come presently. He's a handsome fellow, whatever else he may be."

So it began that way, and then the might and majesty of love got hold upon 'em and enlarged both their minds as it be wont to do. For there's nothing further from the truth than the saying that love makes a man, or a woman, a fool. There's a lot to love when it wakes in fine minds, and if the material be there for a mighty fashion of love between the lovers, and if they be naturally high-minded and made of good stuff, then love will lift 'em to something better than they was before and make 'em more valuable to themselves and their neighbours also. In fact, if the love be fine enough, the couple builds up to perfect understanding upon it, and a perfect understanding between a good man and a good woman, be they high or low, did ought to better the whole earth round about 'em.

Anyway, Samuel come to tea, and he ate a big one and drank two glasses of the sloe gin after; and when he went away, he knew he loved Cicely Green better than anything in the world, and she knew she loved him. But while the man went home and confessed his secret to his mother, a good bit to her astonishment, the girl hid her heart from her father and only showed it in her eyes when she was all alone. The signs amazed her, for she had never loved before, and when she found as she couldn't trespass for no more sloes after all, it broke in upon her that she must already be terrible addicted to Samuel. Because to obey any such order from an ordinary policeman would have been difficult to her nature.

Of course, Chawner very soon found it out and was a good bit amused and a thought vexed also, since he counted on a year at least of Cicely's company, though well knowing such a lovely young woman weren't going to devote herself to his middle-aged convenience for ever. He inquired concerning Samuel Borlase, and Inspector Chowne gave it as his opinion that the material was there, but explained that Sam stood all untried as yet and his value still doubtful.

And meantime Cicely took tea along with Samuel's mother and his old aunt, who lived with them, and told her father they were dear old people and a very nice and

interesting pair indeed; because if you're in love, the belongings of the charmer always seem quite all right at first and worthy of all praise.

In fact, Sam and Cicely lived for each other, as the saying is, afore six weeks were spent, and on Christmas Day, being off duty at the time, the policeman took an afternoon walk with Cicely Green and asked her to marry him.

"You know me," he said, "and very like a common constable lies far beneath your views, as well he may; but there it is: I love you to the soles of my feet, and if, by a miracle of wonder, you was to think I could win you, I'd slave to do so for evermore, my dinky delight."

"'Tis no odds you're a policeman," she said. "You've got to be something. And you very well know I love you, and life's got to be properly empty when you ain't with me. There's nought else in the world that matters to me but only you."

With that the man swallowed her in his great arms and took his first kiss off her. In fact, the world went very well for 'em, till they stood afore Chawner, who demanded time. Indeed, he appeared to be a good bit vexed about it.

"Dash my wig!" he said, "who be you, you hulking bobby, to come upsetting my family arrangements and knocking my well-laid plans on the head in this fashion? Sis came here three months ago to look after me, didn't she, not to look after you. And 'tis all moonshine in my opinion, and I doubt if you know your own minds, for that's a thing this generation of youth never is known to do. And, be it as it will, time must pass—oceans of time— afore I can figure all this out and say whether 'tis to be, or whether it ain't."

They expected something like that, and Cicely had a plan.

"If Sam was to come and live along with you, father," she said, "then I shouldn't leave you at all and we would go on nice and comfortable together."

"For you, yes," said Chawner, winking his eye. "But what about me? I don't intend to neighbour so close as all that with a policeman, I do assure you, my fine dear. And so us'll watch and wait, and see if Samuel Borlase have got that fine quality of patience so needful to his calling—also what sort of hold he can show me on the savings bank, and so on."

Then he turned to the young man.

"I know nought against you, Samuel,"

he said, "but I know nothing for you neither. So it will be a very clever action if we just go on as we're going and see what life looks like a good year hence."

More than that Chawner wouldn't say; but he recognised they should walk out

but the younger, in justice, couldn't quarrel with the verdict, and he only hoped that Cicely wouldn't change her mind in such a parlous long time; for a year to the eye of love be a century.

Well, as elders in such a pass will do,



"And her parent made haste to tell her, while Sam stood mute."

together and unfold their feelings, and he promised that in a year's time he'd decide whether Samuel was up to the mark for his girl.

He was a good bit of a puzzle to Borlase,

Chawner took careful stock of Sam, and the more he gleaned of the young man's opinions, the better he liked him. Old Green was tolerable shrewd, and along with a passion for natural history and its wonders, he didn't leave human nature out of account. He was going on with his own life very clever, unknown to all but one person, and among his varied interests was a boy-like love of practical joking. For he'd get fun out of very unexpected circumstances, as will

appear in due course, and if he could combine business with pleasure and make a good joke pay for itself also, he'd always be quick about it. But among his occupations the story of Samuel Borlase came first for a bit, and he both talked and listened to

She'd laugh with her father sometimes, that Sam hadn't no dazzling sense of fun himself, and it entertained her a lot to see Sam plodding in his mind after her nimble-witted father and trying in vain to see a joke. But what delighted her most was Sam's own



"'You be more to me than ever I thought a living man could be, and I love the ground under your feet, and I be your life also unless you're a liar. So that's that. But a father's a father, and because my father is more to me, after you, than all the world together, I'll ask you please to drop this tragedy-acting and go about your business and let him come in the house.'"

the young fellow and was a good bit amused on the quiet to find Samuel didn't hold by no means such a high opinion of him as he began to feel for the policeman.

Of course, Cicely was always there to help his judgment; but though the natural instinct of the parent is to misdoubt a child's opinions—generally with tolerable good reason—it happened in this case that love lit the girl's mind to good purpose.

dark forebodings about Mr. Green's manner of life, and his high-minded hopes that some day, come he was Chawner's son-in-law, he would save the elder man's soul alive. That always delighted Cicely above everything, and she'd pull a long face and sigh and share Samuel's fine ambitions, and hope how, between them in the future, they'd make her father a better member of society than the Trusham gamekeepers thought he was.

Not that Borlase could honestly say the marks of infamy came out in Mr. Green's view of life. He showed a wonderful knowledge of wild birds and beasts and plants even, and abounded in rich tales of poaching adventures, though he never told 'em as being in his own personal experience. He declared no quarrel with the law himself, but steadfastly upheld it on principle. At the same time a joke was a joke, and if a joke turned on breaking the game laws, or hoodwinking them appointed to uphold right and justice, Chawner would tell the joke and derive a good deal of satisfaction from Sam's attitude thereto.

So time passed and near a year was spent, but Chawner dallied to say the word and let 'em wed; and the crash came on a night in October, when the policeman suddenly found himself called to night duty by Inspector Chowne. 'Twas a beat along the Trusham covers, and a constable had gone ill, and the gamekeepers were yowling about the poachers as usual, instead of catching 'em. So Samuel went his way and looked sharp out for any untoward sign of his fellow-man, or any unlawful sound from the dark woods, where Trusham pheasants harboured of a night. He was full of his own thoughts too, for he wanted cruel to be married, and so did Cicely, and the puzzle was to get Mr. Green to consent without a rumpus.

Nought but a pair of owls hollering to each other did Samuel hear for a good bit. The moon was so bright as day, for the hunter's moon it happened to be at full, and all was silence and peace, with silver light on the falling leaves and great darkness in spruce and evergreen undergrowth. 'Twas at a gate that Sam suddenly heard a suspicious sound and stood stock-still. Footsteps he thought he heard t'other side of a low broken hedge, where birches grew and the gate opened into a rutted cart-track through the woods. The sound was made by no wild creature, pattering four-foot, but the quick tramp of a man, and when Sam stood still the sound ceased, and when he went forward he reckoned it began again. There was certainly an evil-doer on the covert side of the hedge, and Borlase practised guile and pretended as he'd heard nothing and tramped slowly forward on his way. But he kept his eyes over his shoulder and, after he'd gone fifty yards, stepped into the water-table, as ran on the south side of the beat, and crept back under the darkness of the hedge so wily as a hunting weasel. Back

he came as cautious as need be, and for a big and heavy chap he was very clever, and the only noise he made was his breathing, for his heart beat quick and his lungs responded. He got abreast of the gate, still hid in night-black shadows, and then he heard the muffled footfall again and a moment later a man sneaked out of the gate with a gun in one hand and a pheasant in the other. Sam licked his hands and drew his truncheon, and then the moon shone on the face before him and the light of battle died out of his eyes. For there was Chawner Green, with a fur cap made of a weasel skin drawn down over his eyes and the moonshine leaving no doubt as to his identity.

Chawner stood a moment and peeped down the road to see if the policeman was gone on his way. Then out strode Samuel and the elder man used a crooked word and stared upon him and dropped his pheasant in the road. He turned as to fly; but 'twas too late, for Sam's leg-of-mutton hand was on his neckerchief and Mr. Green found himself brought to book at last.

And then Samuel saw a side of Chawner's character as cast him down a lot, for the man put up a mighty fight—not with fists, because he was a bit undersized and the policeman could have put him in his pocket if need was; but with his tongue. He pleaded most forcible for freedom, and when he found his captor was dead to any sporting appeal, he grew personal and young Borlase soon found that he was up against it. At first Chawner roared with laughter.

"By the holy smoke," he said, "I'm in luck, Sam! I thought 'twas Billy King, your colleague, had caught me, and then I'd have been in a tight place, for Billy's no friend of mine and hand-in-glove with the keepers; but you be a different pair of shoes, thank the Lord! Take your hand off, there's a bright lad, and let me pick up my bird. The keepers will have heard the shot, I lay, so best you say you did not."

"I'm cruel sorry for this—cruel sorry," began Samuel in great dismay. "I'd rather have any misfortune fall to my lot than have took you, Mr. Green."

"Then your simplest course will be to forget you have done so," answered the older man. "You go your way and I'll go mine. Your job's on the road, so you stop on it, Sammy, and if they busy chaps pop along, you can say you've heard nought moving but the owlets."

"Duty's duty," replied Sam. "You must come along with me, I guess. Give

me your gun, please, and pick up thicky bird."

Green thought a moment, then he handed over the gun and picked up the pheasant and began on Borlase most forcible. He pleaded their future relationship, the disgrace, the slur on his character and the shame to his girl; and Samuel listened very patient and granted 'twas a melancholy and most misfortunate affair; but he didn't see no way out for either of 'em.

"Duty's duty," he kept saying in his big voice, like a bell tolling.

And then Chawner changed his note and grew a bit vicious.

"So be it, Borlase," he said. "If you're that sort of fool, I'll go along with you this instant moment to the police station; but mark this: so sure as a key's turned on me this night, by yonder hunter's moon I swear as you shan't marry Cicely. That's so sure as I stand here, your captive. If there's a conviction against me, you'll whistle for that woman, and God's my judge I'm telling truth."

Well, Samuel weren't so put about at that as the other apparently expected to find him. He well knew the size of Cicely's love for him, and he'd heard her praise his straightness a thousand times. For she was straight as him and a fine creature in her mind as well as her body. 'Twas true enough she set great store on her father; but love's love, and Sam was quite smart enough to know that love for a parent goes down the wind afore love for a lover. He looked forward, therefore, and weren't shook of his purpose by no threats.

"That's as may be," he said, "and you've no right, nor yet reason, to speak for her. She loves me as never a woman loved a man, and if she saw me put my love afore my duty, I'll tell you what she'd say—she'd say she'd been mistook in me."

"And don't she love me, you pudding-faced fool!" cried Chawner. "Don't she set her father higher than a man she hasn't known a year? Be fair to yourself, Borlase, or else you'll lose the hope of your life. My honour's her honour and my reputation is her reputation. She thinks the world of me and she's a terrible proud woman; and you can take it from me so sure as death, here and now, that she'll hold my side against you till doom and cast you off if you do this fatal thing."

Samuel chewed over that a minute; but he decided as he didn't believe a word of it.

"We haven't kept company in vain for ten months and four days, Chawner Green," he said. "I mean me and your girl. She's the soul of upright dealing and righteousness, and if you was a better man, you'd know it so well as I do."

"She may be," said the other, "but she'll honour her father's name afore ever she'll see him in your hands. She'll think the same as I do about this night's work, and dare you to lay a finger on me if ever you want to look in her face again."

They argued over that a bit and Chawner cursed and swore, because he said the keepers would be on to 'em in half a minute and all lost.

And then he got another idea and challenged Samuel for the last time.

"List to this," he said. "Cicely will be sitting up, though it have gone midnight. She knows I'm out on my occasions—lawful or otherwise—and she'll be there with a bit of hot supper against my return. We pass the door. And if you're still mad enough to hold out against me, you can hear her tell about it with your own ears and see if you are higher in her heart than what I am. She'll hate your shadow when she hears tell of this."

And Samuel, though his mind was in a pretty state by now, agreed to it. Chawner's confidence shook him a bit, for he wasn't a vain man; and yet he saw pretty clear that Cicely would be called to decide betwixt father and lover in any case, and felt the sooner the ordeal was over the better for all concerned. They went their way and never a word more would Borlase answer, though Green kept at him like a running brook to change his mind and act like a sensible man and not let a piece of folly spoil his own life. But he bided dumb until they reached the home of the Greens; and there stood Cicely at the gate with the moon throwing its light upon her and making her lint-white locks like snow.

"Powers in Heaven!" cried Cicely. "What be this, father?"

And her parent made haste to tell her, while Sam stood mute. But when she heard all, the maiden made it exceeding clear how she felt on the subject and turned upon poor Borlase very short and sharp.

"Let's have enough of this nonsense, Sam," she said. "You know me and I know you. You be more to me than ever I thought a living man could be, and I love the ground under your feet, and I be your life also unless you're a liar. So that's that."

But a father's a father, and because my father is more to me, after you, than all the world together, I'll ask you please to drop this tragedy-acting and go about your business and let him come in the house. Give me that gun and get to your silly work, and kiss me afore you go."

She stretched out her hand for the gun, but he wouldn't part with it. He stared upon her and the sweat stood in beads all over his big face.

"This be a night of doom seemingly, and I little thought you'd ever beg for anything I could give as would be denied, Sis," he said; "but you'll be called to see this with my eyes. I've had the cruel misfortune to catch Mr. Green doing evil, and well he knowed he was; and duty's duty, so he must come along with me. And if you know me, as well as you do know me, you know there's nought else possible for me now."

She lifted her voice for her father, however, and strove to show him what a pitiful small thing it was.

"What stuff be you made of, my dear man?" cried Cicely. "Be a wretched bird that nobody owns, and may have flown to Trusham from the other side of the country, going to make you outrage my father and disgrace his family? I could be cross if I didn't reckon you was in a waking dream."

She ran on, but he stopped her, for he knew his number was up by now and didn't see no use in piling up no more agony for any of 'em.

"Listen!" he shouted out, so as the woods over against 'em echoed with the roar of his big voice. "Listen to me, the pair of you, and be done. I can't hear no more, because there's higher things on earth than love of woman. I'm paid—I'm paid the nation's money, you understand, to do my duty. I'm paid my wages by the State, and I've made an oath to God Almighty to do what I've undertaken to do to the best of my human power. And I've caught a man doing evil, and I've got to take him to justice if all the angels in heaven prayed me to let him free."

"If the angels in heaven be more to 'e than her you've called an angel on earth, Samuel," answered back Cicely, "then be it so. I understand now the worth of all you've said—and swore also; but your oath to the police force stands higher than your oaths to me seemingly, so there's no call to waste no more of your time, nor yet mine.

Only know this: if my father sleeps in clink to-night, I'll never wed you, nor look at you again, so help me, God! And now what about it?"

"Think twice," he said, walking very close to her and looking in her beautiful eyes. "Think twice, my dear heart."

But she shook her head and he only see the tears there full of moonshine.

"No need to think twice," she answered. "You know me, Samuel."

He heaved a hugeous sigh then and looked at the waiting man. Chawner was swinging his pheasant by the legs and regarding 'em standing up together. But he said nought.

Then Samuel turned and beckoned Mr. Green with a policeman's nod that can't be denied. And Chawner followed after him like a dog, while Cicely went in the house and slammed home the door behind her.

Not a word did either man utter on their tramp to the station; but there they got at last, and the lights was burning and Inspector Chowne, whose night duty it happed to be, was sitting nodding at his desk. And when Sam stood before him and in a very disordered tone of voice brought the sad news of how the Inspector's brother-in-law had been took red-handed coming out of Trusham, a strange and startling thing followed. For, to the boy's amazement, Inspector Chowne leapt from his seat with delight, and first he shook Chawner's hand so hearty as need be and then he shook Sam's fist likewise; and Chawner, the fox that he was, showed a lot of emotion and his voice failed him and he shook Samuel by the hand also! In fact, 'twas all so contrary to law and order, and reason also, that Samuel stared upon the elder men and prayed the scene was a nightmare and that he'd wake up in his bed any minute.

And then the Inspector spoke.

"Fear nothing, Borlase," he said. "You're saved alive, and you can take a drink out of my whisky bottle in the cupboard if you've got a mind to it and feel a touch of truth might put you on your feet. 'Tis this way, my bold hero. My brother-in-law, Mr. Green here, have a sense of fun as be hidden from the common likes of you and me. He's a great naturalist, and he haunts the woods for beetles and toadstools and the like; and I may tell you on his account that he's a person of independent means, and would no more kill a pheasant, nor yet a guinea-pig, that belonged to another man, than he'd fly over the moon.

But when he heard the Trusham keepers thought he was a poacher, such was his love of a lark that he let 'em go on thinking so, and he's built up a doubtful character much to my sorrow, though there ain't no foundation in fact for it. But he laughs to see the scowling faces, though after to-night he'll mend his ways in that respect I shouldn't wonder."

Samuel stared and looked at the gun in his hand and the pheasant in Chawner's. It comed over him now that Inspector was going back on him and meant to take Green's side.

"What about these?" he said.

"I'll come to them," continued Chowne. "Now you fall in love with my niece and, as becomes a father, Mr. Green have got to size you up. And he took a tolerable stern way so to do; but there again his sense of fun mastered him. He told Sis you was still untried and a doubtful problem, though nought against you, and she said, being terrible trustful of you, as you know, that nought would come between you and your duty. And so this here man thought out a plan, and if the devil could have hit on a craftier, or yet a harsher, I'd be surprised. But mark this, Samuel: he laid it afore Cicely afore he done it. And such was her amazing woman's faith, she agreed to it, because her love for you rose above all doubt. 'Twas a plant, my boy; and if you'd let Mr. Green go his way, you'd have lost your future wife; but because you've done your duty you've got her; and may she always have the rare belief in you she has to-night."

Still Sam found it hard to believe he was waking. But he done a sensible thing and went to Inspector's private tap and poured himself four fingers.

"Here's luck," he said; and Chawner Green always told afterwards that it was the first and last joke his son-in-law ever made.

'Twas he who spoke next.

"Look at that gun, Sam," directed Chawner; and Samuel done so, broke it and

peered at the lamp through the barrel.

"Clean—eh?" asked the tormentor; and Borlase granted it hadn't been fired since it was cleaned last.

"Now look at this pheasant," went on Chawner; and the young man handled the bird and found it stiff and cold.

"How long should you judge it had been dead?" inquired Mr. Green. "Anyway, I'll tell you. Sis bought that creature at her sister's husband's fish and poultry shop two days ago. You'll certainly make a policeman to talk about, Sam; but I'm fearing you'll never rise to be a detective."

They went out together five minutes later, Sam to his beat and Green to his home. And the elder was in a large and human frame of mind, but Samuel hadn't quite took it all in yet.

Then they came to the elder's house, and there was the girl at the gate waiting for 'em as before.

"When she went in and banged the door, you thought she'd gone to weep," said Chawner; "but for two pins, Samuel, I'd have told you she was dancing a fandango on the kitchen floor. 'Tis a very fine thing for a woman to know her faith is so truly founded, and she's got the faith in you would move mountains; and so have I; and you can wed when you're both a mind to it."

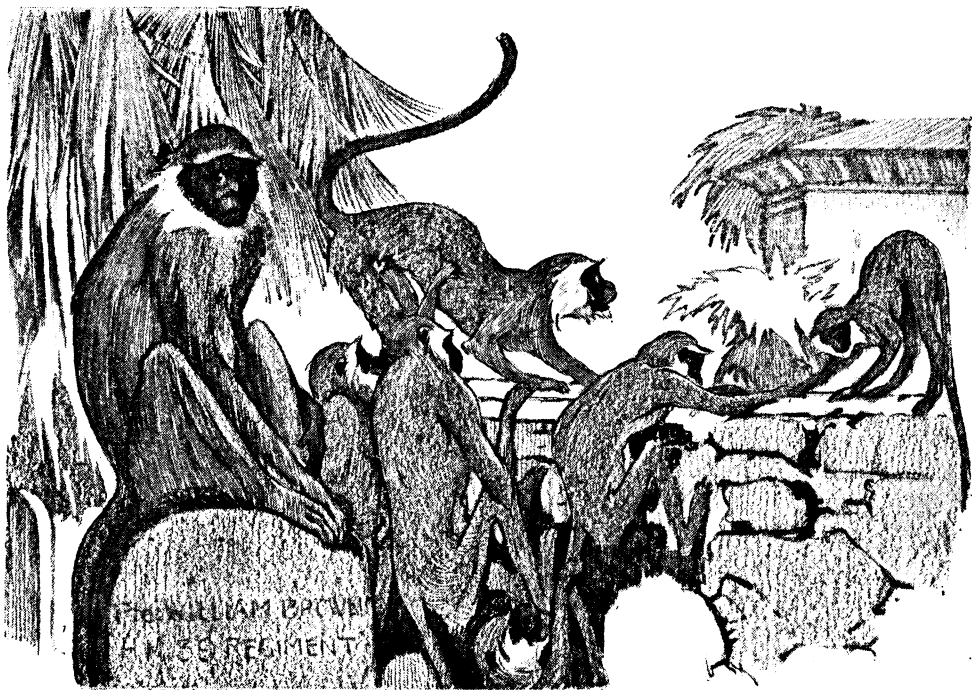
So Chawner left 'em in each other's arms for five minutes, and then Samuel went on his way.

A very happy marriage, and a week after they joined up, Chawner married a new-made widow, which he had long ordained to do in secret; but she wouldn't take him till a year and a day was passed.

And Samuel would often tell about his wife's faith in after-time and doubt if the young men he saw growing up around him would have rose to such fine heights as what he done.

But then Cicely would laugh at him and tell him that his own son was just so steadfast as ever he was, and plenty other women's sons also.





"Over the grassy mounds and crumbling tombs around scores of other monkeys, silver-haired, black-faced, white-whiskered, sat scratching themselves or played leap-frog as though mocking the poor humans lying in this small cemetery of the old fortress."

• THE MOCKERS •

By LIEUT.-COLONEL GORDON CASSERLY

Author of "Dwellers in the Jungle," "Life in an Indian Outpost," etc.

• • ILLUSTRATED BY ERNEST ARIS • •

THE old monkey sitting on the grave stared at the headstone as though he were reading the simple words that told of the young hero who for a century had slept below. "Here Lieth the Body of Ensign Charles Dare, Honourable East Indian Company's Service, Who was Killed at the Early Age of Sixteen Years at the Taking of the Fortress of Ahirgarh, May 9th, 1805."

Another grey ape squatted on the next tombstone, his long tail partly hiding its inscription: "... Private William Brown, H.M. 39th Regiment, Who Perished by the Stings of Wild Bees at Ahirgarh on April 16th, 1828." Over the grassy mounds and crumbling tombs around scores of other monkeys, silver-haired, black-faced, white-

whiskered, sat scratching themselves or played leap-frog as though mocking the poor humans lying in this small cemetery of the old fortress that for a thousand years had crowned the rocky hill rising sheer out of the Central Indian jungle. Then suddenly the hairy troop sprang over the low walls that vainly guarded the sacred spot and, bounding on all fours through the weed-grown enclosure around a small church, jostled each other in through its broken windows and with loud hoots rioted through the deserted building. They jumped on and off the bare altar and chased each other over the mouldering pews, then, content with their desecration, went whooping out again and sprang up the tall trees shading the parade ground.

Spread out below them lay the unlevel plateau of the hill-top; and they looked down on all that remained of the traces of the successive conquerors of India who in turn had held the Fortress of Ahirgarh. The high battlements had been added to by its various masters through the centuries; the ruins of an airy palace spoke of the vanished Hindu lords, the slender minarets and rounded dome of a mosque told of the Mogul Emperors' rule, while the black mouth of a cavernous opening into underground dungeons showed where the captives of Scindhia's tyrannous viceroys had passed for ever from the sight of men. Church and graveyard and a dozen dilapidated European bungalows with crumbling roofs, tattered ceiling-cloths and broken window-frames still holding a few fragments of glass, were all that betrayed the hundred years of British dominion. All save the barracks lodging the fifty sepoy of an Indian regiment and the slated house that sheltered the solitary English officer commanding this small detachment now holding the fort, which fifty years before had contained two thousand European and native soldiers.

To the grey apes in the tree-tops all these meant nothing, yet the generations of their race in the Ahirgarh jungles frequenting the fortress had been greatly affected by the changes of rule of which they were the landmarks. When the Hindus were lords the monkeys were welcome in the fortress; for were they not sacred as the chosen children of the great god Hanuman? But when the Mahommedan Moguls ruled the hairy tribe were given short shrift if they dared scale the walls. Now under the British flag they were free to enter and frolic where they would; and, like other weak races, they misunderstood this toleration by the strong and made a nuisance of themselves.

Why, with scores of miles of tree jungle around to roam freely through, they, like their ancestors, persisted in spending the greater part of each day inside the fortress, none but themselves could tell. But everywhere throughout India these quaint, black-faced *langur* apes seem, wild and savage as they are, to find a fascination in haunting the places where men live or have lived, in climbing into deserted hill-top castles, swinging through the trees bordering the roads of modern military cantonments to jeer at the wondering soldiers below, or crowding the roof of some Hindu temple in the very heart of a busy city to mock the toilers in the noisy streets. It is as though their scorn of human

beings forces them to come among the despised earth-dwellers and mock them openly or to rejoice in the now deserted haunts of Man over his disappearance.

Now, sitting in the branches over the parade ground of Ahirgarh, they watched the small garrison being drilled by its young English subaltern. To all monkeys obedience and discipline are hateful; and so these apes crowding on the bending boughs, squabbling, jostling, biting their neighbours, joined in hooting the poor humans who were so foolish as to obey authority. And when the drill was ended and the officer, the only white man for two hundred miles around, walked away towards his lonely dwelling, these Communists of the air went along with him above his head, mocking the representative of established order with derisive shouts.

As he neared his house a little fox-terrier, which had been watching on the verandah for his coming, jumped down and ran tail-waggingly through the neglected garden to greet him. At sight of it the apes sprang forward towards it through the trees, then dropping into the lowest boughs, screamed abuse at the little animal which they regarded with special dislike.

The dog barked furious reply; and three or four of the largest monkeys leaped down to the ground and, hopping high on all fours, advanced threateningly, gibbering in anger and baring their sharp teeth in a vicious snarl. The subaltern, fearing for his little comrade's life—the dog was his only companion in that lonely station—threw stones at them and rushed forward shouting; and the apes sprang up into the trees again and with the rest of the troop at their tails swung away through the branches towards the great stone mosque standing near the fortress wall. There, dropping to earth, all played about in the stone-paved courtyard where Moslem soldiers, faces towards Mecca, had knelt in prayer under the British flag as freely as their forefathers in the days of the Mahommedan rulers. Then in through the lofty, empty mosque they rioted, as they had through the Christian church; and, content with another sacrilege, they poured out through the arched windows and squatted in a long line on the battlements, pretending to hold serious council as to their movements.

There were grizzled elders with wrinkled black faces fringed with white whiskers that gave them a laughable likeness to old negroes; there were slender, graceful young

apes with long hair shining like silver in the sunlight; mother-monkeys putting protecting arms around quaint little puckered-faced babies a few days old, clinging to the maternal fur with tiny hands that seemed strangely human; impudent, half-grown youngsters, pinching and scratching each other, mocking their elders openly and making more farcical the pretence of a council where all talked and none listened, where fifty opinions were shrieked out together and forgotten by their utterers almost as soon as given.

Eight hundred feet below the line of furry tails hanging down from the battlements lay the jungle, a sea of foliage billowing in green waves away to bare black hills half sunk beneath the horizon, the forest where tigers and cat-like panthers prowled, where sambhurs belled to their mates and fussy black bears nosed out the wild bees' hoard, where the little red dogs ran soundlessly and the fiercest beasts of prey fled before them, as terrified as the harmless deer.

The walls of the old fortress were built on the very edge of a precipice; for the rocky sides of the steep hill had been scarped by human hands, by the labour of tens of thousands of wretched slaves in the days of the Moslem rule. For a hundred feet they fell steep and straight as a wall; and it seemed that nothing but a lizard could cling to them.

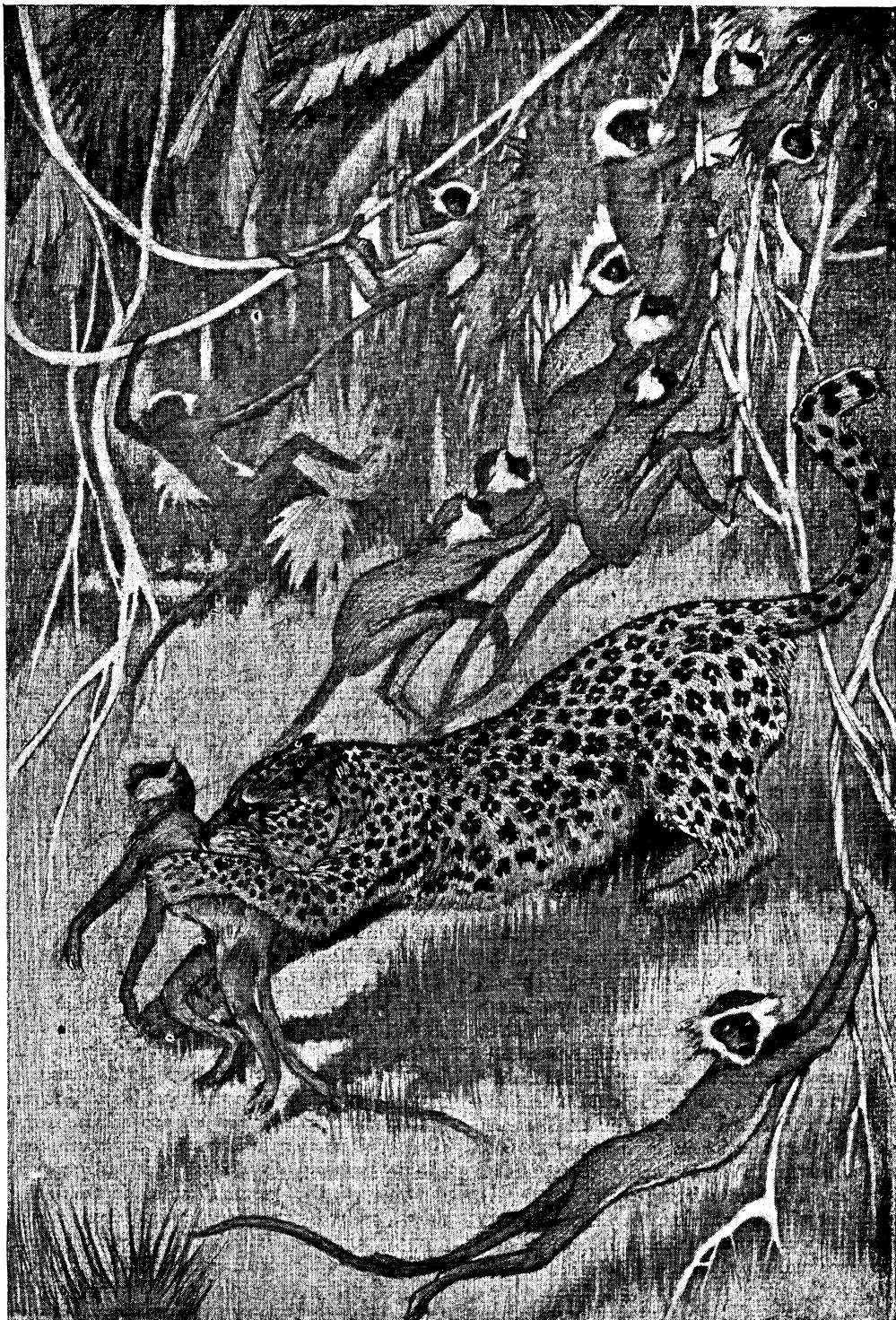
But when as usual the monkeys' council ended in a free fight, the apes dropped from the battlements and scrambled boldly down the sheer face of the precipice, finding almost invisible hold for clinging finger and toe. At the base of the cliff they reached the cart-road that wound up around the hill to end a quarter of a mile farther on at the foot of a flight of narrow stairs cut in the solid rock which, passing under five old gateways, led up to the main entrance of the fortress, closed by massive doors of wood, five inches thick, studded with sharp iron spear-points intended in a siege to keep off trained elephants brought to batter a way in with their heads.

Crossing the road, the apes plunged into the scrub jungle clothing the steep hill-side and scurried down through it until they reached the forest below. There by the leafy runways high above earth they went whooping lightheartedly; swinging by hand and foot, leaping from tree to tree, hooting like street urchins at sambhur stag and hind feeding quietly in the undergrowth. Even the tiniest babies clung firmly to their

mothers' bodies and, needing no paw to hold them, were no impediment to the flight. With the sudden noise of their crashing through the branches as they flung themselves forward in mad flight they startled the timid four-horned antelopes that grazed in the grassy glades with twitching ears always a-cock for sound of approaching danger. They passed in frenzied leaps over a pack of wild dogs resting after a night's hunt, who lifted their pointed muzzles and sniffed the hot air and, recognising a prey out of reach, laid heads on paws and dozed again. And the mockers yelled derision at them as they went on through the trees, shattering the silence of the jungle and sending the scared birds up from the cool shade into the scorch of the sunshine. They rushed along the air-trails as if their lives depended on their haste, then lingered to pluck leaf or berry and cram it into hungry pouch, and suddenly started off again aimlessly in another direction.

Presently in their path stood a tall *sal* tree bearing strange fruit; for its boughs bent under the weight of a mass of vultures, dozens of them, squealing and pecking peevishly at their neighbours. Again and again one would be pushed off its perch and launch itself into the air, rising straight up high above the tree-tops and then with the silken rustle of wings swoop down towards the ground—only to rocket up again at the threatening greeting of a sleepy growl. For beside the mangled carcass of a sambhur hind, his kill of the previous night, a tiger lay at the foot of the tree, a big beast with the black-striped orange fur of his back shading into white below, a thick ruff of hair standing out on his neck and a strangely marked mask of yellow and black, not so terrifying now when the baleful light of the eyes were hidden by the closed lids and the lips fell over the white fangs as the brute slept.

But suddenly, with a din that might awaken the dead, pandemonium broke loose above his head when the apes saw him. For they knew him as a deadly enemy given to surprising by a swift rush heedless monkeys playing on the ground or fetching down equally foolish ones carelessly squatting on branches within reach of a sudden spring. So they now shrieked hatred and defiance of him, they gibbered in anger, they gripped the boughs with their forepaws and shook them senselessly, they danced up and down in futile rage, while they showered insults and abuse on the recumbent beast, which, well-fed and drowsy, refused to pay them



"A slender yellow body flashed through the squatting groups, there was a shriek of agony, and the panther sprang off through the undergrowth with a screaming ape in its jaws."

the compliment of even opening an eye to glance at them.

His indifference exasperated them beyond endurance. The old monkeys and the mothers gnashed their teeth, the young ones leaped down from branch to branch to get nearer to him as they screamed abuse. They pelted him with twigs and jungle fruits. Two or three in their excitement sprang into the tree on which the vultures perched, only to be promptly driven back again by the threatening hooked beaks, as the foul birds, fluffing up their feathers, pecked angrily at the intruders.

Suddenly the tiger awoke and raised his head; and at the steady stare of the green eyes unreasoning panic seized the apes. A mother with her black-faced babe clutching her long fur took fright first and the whole troop crashed off behind her, never stopping until they had put a mile of forest between them and the tiger.

Then they checked in their headlong flight as their foolish brains forgot the reason of it; and they dawdled, gossiped and bickered in the tree-tops, until some sudden whim seized them and they set off again.

A gleam of yellow in the green shadows of the undergrowth caught the eyes of the leading monkeys; and first one, then another, stopped to peer down with craning necks and heads cocked first on this side, then on that. A wild chattering broke out as they saw crouching under a bush a beast more dreaded than even a tiger by their kind.

It was a panther, its golden skin dappled with black dots grouped in circles and so blending with the chequered pattern of sunshine and shadow under the trees that it was hard to see. The beast was watching a small antelope, a *chinkara* buck with short, curved and ringed horns, which was cropping the grass in an open glade. Stealthily the spotted killer began to creep nearer and nearer to the unconscious prey, when suddenly a wild chorus broke out overhead; and the startled buck, understanding the warning, leapt away in high bounds. The baffled hunter lifted its head and snarled its rage up at the interfering apes.

But, rejoicing in their enemy's disappointment, they answered with whoops of delight and mocked the hungry beast, until they tired of the sport and whirled away through the tree-tops. They forgot the panther almost as soon as they lost sight of it; but it was more mindful of them. Slipping silently through the undergrowth, it followed

them at a distance, guided by the sound of their noisy passage.

And hours later, when the heedless monkeys dropped to the ground in an open space to play and pick up the insects swarming among the blades of coarse grass, a slender yellow body flashed through the squatting groups, there was a shriek of agony, and the panther sprang off through the undergrowth with a screaming ape in its jaws. To a chorus of frenzied cries the others scrambled wildly into the trees, in mad panic flung headlong through the branches and never stopped until they had placed a couple of miles between them and death.

Then with chattering teeth and trembling limbs they huddled together high above earth with a vague sense of protection in the feel of their neighbours' quaking bodies, too terrified to descend for their eventide drink when the sun was setting. Rather than risk the awful dangers that lurked on the ground they preferred to go thirsty to bed. And through the hot night, crowded thick on the topmost boughs, they slept fitfully, waking ever and again from dreadful dreams; until the welcome daylight came to put an end to their agony of fear.

With the darkness their terror vanished; and in their brainless way they even forgot their late companion's dreadful death. They went whooping back through the tree-tops towards the hill of Ahirgarh, climbed its steep cliffs, scrambled over the high walls and rushed to drink in the scum-covered ponds of rainwater on the rocky plateau.

In the night grim Tragedy had swept over the fort also and brushed the little community with its black wing. As the subaltern awoke to another day of work and loneliness he stretched out his hand mechanically to stroke the faithful little dog that usually slept on his bed. It was not in its place; and, as he called it, his grey-bearded Mahommedan butler came pityingly to his bedside, followed by his young Indian soldier servant carrying a pathetic little object in his arms—the stiffened corpse of the fox-terrier. Hearing a faint rustling noise on the verandah during the night it had jumped out through the low window and in the darkness pounced—not on the harmless lizard that it expected to find, but—on a small and very deadly snake, a *karait*, the venomous fang of which had pricked the dog's eager paw. The little animal in its death-agony had loyally refrained from awaking its master and gone out to gasp away its short life alone under the stars.

The subaltern had looked on dead men with less emotion than he gazed at the rigid body of the faithful companion of his lonely life. Never again would it greet him with loving caress or trot happily at his heels in his solitary walks. In the weary hours so hard to pass when the man-killing heat of noon and afternoon held him prisoner in his gloomy bungalow—it had been a hospital and generations of fever-smitten soldiers had died in every chamber of it, while the haunted dead-house lay just outside his bedroom window—he must sit alone now with no warm little body curled up in his lap, no eager tongue gratefully licking his idly caressing hand. The boy—he was little more—had no comrade of his own race to lessen his solitude; and the little dog had been his only friend in the utter loneliness. The butler and the young orderly shared his grief; for they had loved it too. Together the three men laid the little animal to rest in a corner of the neglected garden. And as they turned silently away from the small grave a jeering chorus burst out in the trees over their heads; and the grinning black faces of the ape colony looked down at them through the leaves, as though mocking their sorrow. Angrily the orderly picked up a stone to throw at the gibing crew; and the monkeys with triumphant hoots leaped away through the branches.

As they went the subaltern looked longingly, as he had often done, at the small babies clinging tight to their mothers; and he wished that he had one of them as a pet to console him a little for the loss of his companion. He said as much to his orderly, regretting the difficulty of capturing a wild *langur*. But the sepoy, devoted to him as Indian soldiers are to their white officers, mentally resolved to try to get his master one.

Next morning the troop of monkeys were playing on the ground near the mosque when four or five men of the garrison approached them. Used to the constant presence of humans the apes paid no attention to them. But suddenly a shot rang out; and a female, seated on the grass with a small infant beside it, gave a cry of pain and collapsed on the ground.

There was an instant wild commotion and the monkeys, scattering, fled in all directions; while the baby crept affrightedly to its mother. With a supreme last effort of maternal love she staggered up, seized and flung it to a big male ape, which even in his panic stopped, caught the little one in his

arms and bounded away with it. He had reached the fortress wall and sprung up on top of it, when the orderly, furious at this unlooked-for intervention, fired again and shot him.

But even as he fell the dying ape, true to the animal's unselfish instinct to protect the young of its race, threw the baby down on the far side of the wall, where it clung in terror to the edge of the precipice, which here fell sheer two hundred feet to the winding road below. The sepoys clambered up the wall and the orderly was starting to lower himself to secure his prize, when the terrified infant, trying to climb down the cliff, slipped, slid and fell down its steep face, clutching desperately with tiny fingers at every crack and crevice, until its fall was arrested by a projecting knob of rock a hundred feet down.

The sepoy, unable to follow as there was no foothold for a man, sent one of his comrades for a rope; which, when it arrived, he tied round his body and made his companions lower him, kicking and spinning round and round, down the precipice. The cord proved too short to bring him within reach of the baby, which, however, was so panic-stricken by his near approach, that it let go its hold of the rock and, grabbing vainly at every projection on the cliff face, fell, scratched and bruised, into the arms of another sepoy sent along the road to cut off its escape.

The frightened little animal bit his hand twice in its frantic struggles to escape; but the man, whipping off his *puggri*—the nine-foot-long strip of cloth wound round his head as a turban—wrapped the infant up in a squealing, struggling bundle and brought it in triumph back to the fort.

An hour later the subaltern, reading a three-days'-old Bombay newspaper as he lay in a long chair, was astonished by the appearance of his smiling orderly, carrying the silver-haired baby, already almost resigned to its fate as it nibbled approvingly at a banana. And before the day was out Bunder—which means monkey—as it was promptly named, contentedly buried its black muzzle in a novel delicacy, bread and sweetened milk in a bowl held by its new master, who never learned at what cost to ape life his new pet had been acquired.

In a couple of days the wee beastie seemed to have forgotten its former free existence and had settled down happily to the new life, in which the restraint of a belt and light chain was amply compensated for by over-feeding and universal petting. Forgotten

the dizzy swoops through the air, the head-long leaps across the fearsome voids between tree and tree, the mad flights at dawn and the lazy siestas in shadowed leafy bowers at hot noon. Bunder nestled as confidently against the subaltern's shoulder as ever it had against its mother's breast; and its tiny fingers, so human-like with their knuckles and miniature nails, closed around his thumb or explored his hair and moustache for non-existent parasites as boldly as they had searched the maternal fur in the monkeys' ceaseless hunt for small game. It clung tightly to him as he carried it and, whenever he sat down to read in an easy chair, climbed on his shoulder and, cuddling close to his cheek, settled contentedly to sleep. It speedily developed a strong affection for him and was unhappy if they were separated. Whenever the subaltern belted on his sword and took down his helmet Bunder knew that this meant that he was about to leave it and began to whimper as plaintively as a child. Not all the attentions of the butler and the orderly, who vied with each other in spoiling it, could console the little animal for its master's absence; and its joy at his return every time that he re-entered the bungalow was touching.

At first Bunder was usually attached to a pillar of the verandah. But its late associates soon discovered it here; and, crowding into the big trees around the house, they shrieked abuse at the unfortunate baby and taunted it with treason to its own race. Bewildered, distressed and frightened, the wee monkey puckered up its little mouth and uttered piteous cries, until its owner, realising the situation, took it inside. The same thing happened every time that the other apes could contrive to catch a glimpse of it; to do which they haunted the neighbourhood of the bungalow and perched on its roof in noisy groups. So it was necessary to keep Bunder a prisoner in the house during the hours in which they frequented the fort.

With the coming of the rainy season in the last days of June the *langurs* deserted Ahirgarh, just when, to more sensible animals, it would seem to offer its greatest attraction as a residence in the dry shelter that its empty buildings would provide against the drenching downpours of the monsoon. With their usual foolishness they preferred to pass the wet months crouching miserably in the dripping trees with damp fur plastered to their steaming bodies.

When the sun shone once more and the

black rain-clouds had blown away to their final shattering against the Himalayan mountains in the far north the *langurs* came again—and found a half-grown, impertinent Bunder, indifferent to their taunts, ready to jeer back at them and answer their insults with worse ones. For to him now his new friends were preferable; he seemed to identify himself completely with men and despise the monkey tribe. Whenever, as holding his owner's hand, he hopped along awkwardly on his hind-legs, or at the full length of his chain loped ahead of him on all fours, in their walks through the fort he saw the apes grimacing at him from the trees or on the ground, he had to be held back forcibly to prevent him rushing forward to fight them. He was a great favourite with the men of the detachment and gravely returned their salutes by raising a hairy paw to his forehead in imitation of his master. They used to make him ill by stuffing him with sugary native sweetmeats whenever the subaltern came to inspect the barracks and left him fastened up outside.

The autumn and the pleasant winter of India with its sunny days and bracingly cold nights brought him in their passage growth and strength. With the spring came the mating time; and even among his human friends Bunder heard the call. He became restless, moody, unhappy, refused food and answered the voices of the apes by sad, crooning cries. As they plunged through the branches or gambolled on the ground his eyes followed them wistfully; and, standing up, he strained at his chain and held out his arms appealingly towards them.

The subaltern sorrowfully realised that Nature was too strong a rival, one that would not be gainsaid. He had grown very fond of his pet, too fond to see him suffer. He was tempted to set him free, although he knew that he would feel the loss of the monkey greatly; but fear of the reception that Bunder might meet with from his wild kindred restrained him at first. However, the animal was well grown and powerful and able to hold his own.

So one morning when the hairy troop rioted around the bungalow and the captive, tugging at his chain, cried out to them piteously, his master hardened his heart and, unfastening the strap about the monkey's waist, pushed him towards the others. For a moment Bunder stood amazed, then understanding that he was free, sprang off in swift bounds to join his kin, while his master anxiously watched their reception of him.

Many of the *langurs* were on the ground. As Bunder came towards them on all fours they drew together and faced him defiantly, the males showing their teeth in a threatening snarl. But undismayed he dashed right into the thick of them. There was straightway a rough-and-tumble fight; and the anxious watcher could distinguish nothing but an agitated heap of hairy bodies, snapping jaws and scratching paws. But suddenly the mass was rent asunder; and Bunder appeared, dragging out the biggest black-faced bully of the crew, and bit, clawed and battered him until the beaten braggart squealed for mercy and, breaking loose, fled in shameful defeat. Then the victor, ignoring the other males, who drew aside like cowards as he approached, selected a damsel to his taste and paid bold court to her; and when, coyly repulsing him, she retreated bashfully into a tree, he followed her with a conquering air. And that was the last the watcher saw of him.

For next day the *langurs* deserted the fort; and not until the end of the Rains did they return to it. First over the wall of all the troop was Bunder; and, no doubt sighing for bachelor freedom again, he made straight for the bungalow in which his youth had been spent.

But the house was shut up and had a mournful and deserted look. The returned prodigal sprang on to the verandah and, standing up against the door, beat on it with his paws and, when it remained inhospitably closed, shook it in rage.

But no one came to open it. Bunder

looked around in bewilderment. His kindred, grouped in the trees of the garden, were watching him. They, too, seemed awed by the want of life, the unusual silence, around them. No soldiers moved about the fort, no bugles sounded, no loud-shouted words of command re-echoed from the walls. The apes seemed the only living creatures in Ahirgarh.

They were. During their long absence some high official at Army Headquarters in Simla had at last realised the folly of guarding an old fortress that had long years ago outlived its usefulness. The detachment had been withdrawn; and the subaltern and his sepoy were back again with their regiment in one of the biggest cantonments of India.

Bunder was ignorant of this. He only knew that the door of his old home was cruelly shut against him, that the master whom he had loved and deserted was not there to take him in his arms and caress him forgivingly. And the heartbroken monkey laid his head against the unresponsive wood and wailed like a lost child.

Then from the black-faced crew grinning at him in the tree-tops broke out the old mocking chorus. Bunder sprang up, chattering with anger, and bounded furiously towards the scoffers. But suddenly he stopped; his mood changed. He looked about him stupidly, the memory of his former life slipping from him. Then he leaped into the nearest tree; and, once more one with his kith and kin, he mocked loudest of them all.

MONTANA, SWITZERLAND, IN JULY.

ABOVE the flowering meadow-lands the larks sing all day long.

From morn till night the chaffinch pipes his hurried, tireless song.
And up and down the pastures green the cows pass to and fro,
The jangling music of their bells rings softly as they go.

The flowers upon the meadow-lands are very fair and sweet;
They weave a carpet—white and blue and golden for our feet.
Across those sunny flowering meads a streamlet winds its way,
Amongst its stones it laughs and sings like happy souls at play.

The pine trees—fragrant, slim and tall—climb up the meadow-land,
Within their tops the whispering winds sing songs they understand.
And round about, like sentinels, the giant mountains lie,
In stately snowy loveliness against the summer sky.

L. G. MOBERLY.

BUT FOR AUNT JUDITH

By WILLIAM CAINE

ILLUSTRATED BY TOM PEDDIE

THAT was what they all said about young Evan Baldwin, but he did not share their good opinion of him. On the contrary, he regarded himself as one of the few hopeful signs that English Art exhibited. Such people must expect to be in the minority. He realised this and did not complain because his family and friends despaired of him. They were welcome to do so. Despair was proper to their age, just as confidence was proper to his. No one over thirty had a right to be optimistic; such people were practically dead and buried; but at eighteen the world was still all before a fellow and the Future was his to command.

Hopeless? *He?* By no kind of means. Hopeful? Not even that. One did not hope about a certainty. One waited and worked and, in due course, one arrived. And that was all there was to it.

So while the Baldwin connection shook their heads and predicted disaster, young Evan went on gaily in his evil courses, his soul aflame with enthusiasm and his scorn heavy against the Cheesemongers, by which term he generalised his uncles, aunts, cousins and grandfather. The fact that his mother was not a Cheesemonger alone enabled him to do so, for, thrown upon his own resources, he must quickly have starved to death or abandoned painting in favour of something more immediately remunerative. But in the teeth of all the Baldwins, his mother believed in him and backed him up, and as her income, though it was a small one, permitted her to do so without their permission, the Baldwins were obliged to put up with it. She could not, however, prevent them from shaking their heads, and this they did whenever they met together, which happened constantly, for they were a very clannish lot. Among them it became a settled thing that poor Adela was a fool and that

that wretched boy of hers was hopeless—absolutely.

Having thus classified and docketed mother and son, the family settled down patiently to await the inevitable catastrophe.

So, when young Evan arrived, one afternoon, out of the sky, upon the doorstep of his Aunt Judith Watson, wife of the not-too-prosperous doctor of Banstead-in-the-Bush and mother of six, he was received as a Baldwin, but not too warmly.

He hastened to define his position. "Don't be alarmed, Aunt Judith," he said, after undergoing her frigid salute. "I haven't come to stay with you. I know that your quarters are a bit on the narrow side, with all those babies of yours springing up; and I'd never have looked near you if I'd thought that you'd put yourself out about me and if I'd not been already provided with a bed. I'm at the inn here—'The Dragon,' nice old place—I did a sketch of it after lunch this morning—and I expect to stay only to-night. But I promised mother if I got anywhere near you to look you up and give you her love. You see, I'm doing a sketching walking-tour through this end of England. I've been at it three weeks now and I've got some stunning things done. But that doesn't interest you, of course, and I apologise for mentioning it. I really only did so to explain why I'm here, Aunt Judith."

So the ingenuous lad prattled on, while he drank the tea which his good aunt had poured out for him, and Mrs. Watson resolved that, Baldwin or no Baldwin, this was the last time that Evan should be allowed inside her house. Impossible! That was the word for him. Impossible and hopeless! Poor, poor Adela! What trouble she was storing up for herself!

The maid opened the door and announced

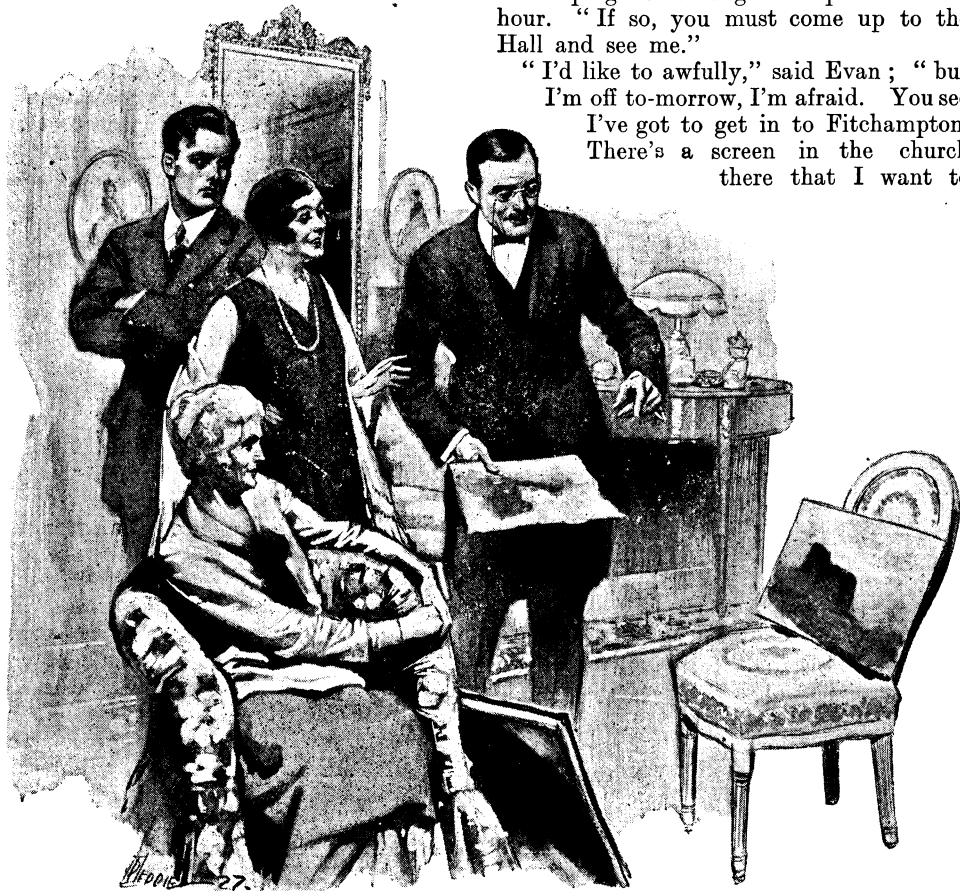
Miss Braydon, and a little oldish woman came in, accompanied by an obese old pug.

Nothing could have been more annoying to Mrs. Watson, because this old lady was the richest old lady anywhere about and had quite recently appointed Mrs. Watson's husband to be her physician in ordinary *vice* old Dr. Crump of Fitchampton, deceased.

happily as if he had known her for years. Mrs. Watson detested him more and more.

"Are you staying any time with your aunt?" Miss Braydon asked him when she rose to take her leave. He had been an agreeable surprise to her, wound up as she had been to do the civil thing by her new doctor's wife; and she was grateful to him for helping her through her quarter of an hour. "If so, you must come up to the Hall and see me."

"I'd like to awfully," said Evan; "but I'm off to-morrow, I'm afraid. You see I've got to get in to Fitchampton. There's a screen in the church there that I want to



"'Delicious!' cried Mrs. Watson. 'Most charming,' observed her husband. . . . Evan was perfectly silent. 'Isn't it sweet, Evan?' said Mrs. Watson, and nudged her nephew. 'Oh, beautiful!' said Evan. 'Splendid!'"

It was not, of course, the visit of Miss Braydon that annoyed Mrs. Watson, but the fact that it should coincide with Evan's. Praying that Evan might not commit some unpardonable *gaucherie*, she rose effusively and welcomed the influential client. It was necessary to introduce Evan, and she did it, but, by turning her shoulder to him, she strove to suggest to him the propriety of keeping himself in the background.

This was a thing that Evan simply did not know how to do. Within three minutes he was chatting away with Miss Braydon as

draw before I go back to London."

"To draw the screen?" said Miss Braydon. "Are you an architect, then?"

"No," said Evan, "I'm a painter. But there's nothing like good old carved oak for getting your teeth into in black and white. I've had enough fun, sketching, these last three weeks. It's time I did something honest."

"Why!" cried Miss Braydon, "I didn't know that you had a painter for a nephew, Mrs. Watson. How proud you must be of him!"

Mrs. Watson murmured something the meaning of which nobody could catch.

"But I must see these sketches you've done," said Miss Braydon. "I love pictures. Indeed, I sketch myself. Please bring them down now, won't you, Mr. Baldwin?"

"I'm sorry," said Evan; "but I'm not staying with Aunt Judith. This is just a call I'm making. I wasn't going to quarter myself on her without warning, and so I'm at 'The Dragon' for to-night."

"You know, Evan," said his aunt, "that there's always room here for you and for as long as you like. When Miss Braydon came in, I was just going to ask you to bring your things round here."

"Oh," he said, "I'm afraid I must be off to-morrow. It wouldn't be fair to disturb you just for one night."

"Nonsense, Evan!" said his aunt affectionately. "Bertha and Mary will be delighted to take little Ferdy in with them. He generally sleeps with Charlie, you know. Then Henry and Paul can double up in Henry's bed and you can have Paul's, if you won't object to sharing a room with Charlie. He snores a little and sometimes talks in his sleep, but I'm sure you won't mind that."

"Well," said Miss Braydon, "I must leave you two to settle this matter between you. But as your nephew is off to-morrow, Mrs. Watson, why don't you and the Doctor bring him to the Hall this evening to dinner? And the sketches too, Mr. Baldwin?"

"I'll be charmed," said Evan, who liked the old lady.

"Good," said Miss Braydon. "Eight o'clock, please. And we shall be just by ourselves, so don't dress."

"I haven't got my dress clothes," said Evan, "so I couldn't."

"You see, Miss Braydon, my nephew is on a walking-tour," Mrs. Watson hastened to explain.

"No," said Evan, "I haven't got any dress clothes *anywhere*. I can't afford luxuries of that kind. I'm quite enough burden to my mother without sticking her for boiled shirts and swallow tails."

"Quite right," said Miss Braydon. "Then is it agreed, Mrs. Watson?"

Mrs. Watson said that it was more than kind of Miss Braydon, and then Miss Braydon clucked to her pug and went away.

"Evan," said Mrs. Watson with much more warmth than she had hitherto exhibited, "this is a great bit of good fortune for you, my dear. Miss Braydon is very well

off and she is a great collector of pictures. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if she buys something from you to-night. She is greatly interested in Art and I believe she has helped quite a number of young painters. It's a sort of hobby of hers. If you play your cards well to-night this may prove a very valuable acquaintance for you; and if it should, I shall be so glad. I don't pretend that your uncle and I approve of your trying to be a painter, but, after all, you are a Baldwin and my brother's son, and if I can be the means of securing Miss Braydon's friendship for you, I shall feel that the family owes me something. We are all so anxious about your future, Evan. Art is such an uncertain way of making money."

"That's all right, Aunt Judith," he said. "I know I should have pleased the family better if I'd become a clerk or a doctor or something of that kind, and I know it's very unlike a Baldwin to think less of money than of one's soul; but there it is, and we must make the best of it. And, by the way, I didn't understand what you said about my playing my cards well to-night. Do you mean that we're to rook Miss Braydon at Auction? That sounds rather an uncertain way of making money too."

"Absurd boy!" said his aunt indulgently, but with detestation in her heart. "You know very well what I mean. I only want to put a little practical wisdom into your head, Evan. No one can get on in this world without friends."

"But, Aunt Judith," he protested, "what an extraordinary idea! What on earth have one's friends to do with one's getting on? Do you mean that I've got to make friends with everybody who buys one of my pictures? Because, if so, it simply can't be done. I could manage time for them now perhaps, but think what it will be in a few years when I've arrived and sell all I can paint. Why, I should never get a moment for work, I should be so busy cultivating my intimates."

"Absurd boy!" she said again. "How extravagant you are!"

"Aren't I?" he said. "That's why I'm not coming down on you for a bed to-night, I suppose. Well, good-bye now, Aunt Judith. When shall I be round here? About half-past seven?"

"That'll do," said his aunt, without making any attempt to alter his decision to pass the night at "The Dragon." "And don't forget your sketches. Please don't

do that, Evan. I beg you not to be quixotic about your sketches."

"Well, of course not," he said, surprised. "Didn't Miss Braydon ask to see them? Why on earth should I omit to bring them, Aunt Judith? It would be unpardonable."

II.

"AND now, dear Miss Braydon," said Mrs. Watson, "are we not to see *your* pictures? I'm sure Evan would be so interested in them."

Miss Braydon had examined the work of Mrs. Watson's hopeless nephew and had even expressed (to Mrs. Watson's astonishment) her satisfaction with some of them; but she had not yet offered to buy any and Mrs. Watson—that faithful Baldwin—was beginning to grow anxious. For though she disliked Evan heartily, her loyalty to her family urged her, even against her inclinations, to do all that lay in her power to advance the youth in his so unfortunately chosen career. This fancy which Miss Braydon seemed to have taken to the boy was unaccountable, but it was assuredly a very great stroke of luck for him. The whims of the wealthy were, indeed, often unaccountable; but that was no reason why the possibilities they contained should be ignored. Could Miss Braydon be induced to buy one or two of Evan's ugly little sketches a connection would be established between Evan and the Hall. His elbow would be in. It would rest only with himself to maintain and increase his advantage. How useful for a young painter to be able to refer in conversation to so important a patron as Miss Braydon! Such a connection might lead to anything. Was it not said that Miss Braydon had practically made a young man who was now an A.R.A.? Had she not financed him for years? Why should not Evan equally be financed by her? It was unfortunate, to be sure, that his sketches were not prettier, but that was a matter of small significance beside the excellent terms on which he seemed to be establishing himself with the old lady. Yes, he was perhaps a little more worldly wise than he had seemed. Probably his unworldliness was all a pose. At any rate, no one could have "played his cards" better than Evan had, so far, this evening; and it was clear that Miss Braydon was delighted with him. Now let them get her to show them her own sketches, let Evan say something complimentary, and the trick would be done.

Evan's feet would be set at last upon the

road to fame and fortune and respectability; the nightmare which had beset the Baldwin family for the past two years—the nightmare of Evan becoming a disreputable Bohemian, perhaps worse—perhaps even an evildoer, a criminal—would be banished. The family would be able to breathe again.

And so she begged Miss Braydon to show them her sketches.

Miss Braydon was a wise old woman; but Homer nodded, the philosophers of Gotham went to sea in a tub, and who was Miss Braydon to rise wholly superior to human frailty? She protested, of course, but she yielded; for the temptation to hear a real artist say something complimentary about his or her pictures is one which no amateur painter may resist. I don't think Miss Braydon would have volunteered the exhibition—she was wise enough for that—but once she had been given an opening by Mrs. Watson her sagacity deserted her and only a very little pressing was required to send her to the drawer where her perpetrations were ambushed, though, had Mr. Baldwin joined in the entreaties of his uncle and aunt, she would have been better pleased. But so many people had complimented this rich old lady upon her sketches that she felt no real misgivings. This nice young Baldwin would certainly recognise her gifts.

"Of course," she said as she opened the portfolio, "these things are not meant to be taken seriously, Mr. Baldwin. Had I ever studied Art I do think that I might have made something of it; but I have never had time, you know, and I've just had to muddle along as best I could. They're really dreadful, of course, but they've given me a lot of amusement, poor things, and at least they make pleasant mementoes of the various lovely places that I've visited in my time. This is the Château of Chillon," and she propped a sketch against the back of the chair on which Evan's drawings had been shown.

"Delicious!" cried Mrs. Watson.

"Most charming," observed her husband, as he adjusted his pince-nez and bent over for a nearer view.

Evan was perfectly silent.

"Isn't it sweet, Evan?" said Mrs. Watson, and nudged her nephew.

"Oh, beautiful!" said Evan. "Splendid!"

He had just remembered that he had dined with Miss Braydon and that she had been very kind to him, and that she was really a very nice old lady. The sketch was a foolish thing, of course; perhaps a little

less nauseous than the usual run of amateur performances; but, after all, this decent old Miss Braydon had done it and such a nice old party must be forgiven. Decency was decency and a true pronouncement upon the sketch was out of the question. Besides, what did it matter? Amateurs were detestable animals and to be discouraged in every possible way, but there might be exceptions

or "You really *ought* to have studied seriously, Miss Braydon."

The old lady was delighted with him and continued to exhibit her pictures until Evan was nearly distracted with the effort to find some observation which should be at once new, true and sound like a compliment.

At last it was over and Mrs. Watson rose to say good-bye.



"His aunt had screamed, his uncle had cried 'Shame!'"

to even that excellent rule. And he felt that Miss Braydon was an exception, if ever there had been one. She was old and a woman and he had just eaten at her table. Yes, this was a moment when principle might be abandoned for once.

Thereafter he behaved just as his aunt could have wished. In every sketch he found some agreeable phrase such as "Astonishing composition there," or "Amazing chiaroscuro," or "There's some remarkable aerial perspective in that one,"

All had gone well so far, but with a lunatic like Evan one could never be too careful. Let them go away now, while the fortunate impression which he had evidently made was yet unimpaired. And, by making a move now, Miss Braydon was given an opportunity—and when she was in a good temper—of buying one of Evan's pictures.

To her delight Miss Braydon took it.

"One moment," she said. "Before you

go I must get Mr. Baldwin to let me have some of his work. May I see your things again, Mr. Baldwin? I didn't quite make up my mind which I liked best."

"Of course," said Evan, and began to spread out his sketches on the floor.

"I like this one immensely," said Miss Braydon, "and this too. And

"Of course," said Evan. The woman was in her own house, he supposed.

"Well, it's just that I feel that here the tone of this red roof is hardly strong enough."

"Oh yes," said Evan pleasantly, "it's quite strong enough."

"Well," she said, "it was only my ignorant idea. I'm sure you're right."

"Yes," he said,



"Miss Braydon had burst out laughing. 'What's up?' he demanded, staring. 'What is it?' 'Oh!' cried Miss Braydon. 'Oh, you delicious creature, I declare I would hug you if you were only three months younger.'"

this—only, may I venture a suggestion?"

"I'm right all right; about that, at any rate. There's nothing people go wrong

about so easily as a red roof. The fact is"—and he began to walk about the room gesticulating—"that you simply can't paint it as strong as it looks in bright sunlight and maintain any quality at all in the rest of the picture. It throws everything out of tone inevitably. No one can paint in a key half as high as Nature's; but people will go on trying. The result is simply crude violent local colour all over the shop without an atom of atmosphere anywhere to be seen. Of course a skilful painter can disguise the wickedness of this method to some extent. It's only in the hands of bunglers and amateurs that the true horror of the thing becomes apparent.

"Now," he continued, "take any typically bad amateur water-colour drawing——" Here he halted in his prowl, opened Miss Braydon's portfolio, plunged his hand into it and drew out a sketch, at haphazard, face downwards. He turned it over and laid it on the table. "See here, Miss Braydon," he went on as he laid an accusing finger upon it. "Look at this hideous thing——"

He paused in surprise, for his aunt had screamed, his uncle had cried "Shame!" and Miss Braydon had burst out laughing.

"What's up?" he demanded, staring. "What is it?"

"Oh!" cried Miss Braydon. "Oh, you delicious creature, I declare I would hug you if you were only three months younger."

"Why?" he asked, puzzled. "What have I said?"

Miss Braydon, gurgling with amusement, told him, for both the Watsons were dumb with emotion and there was no one else. He stood aghast for a moment, then he threw back his head and shouted with laughter. "Oh, Heavens!" he cried. "I

say, I ought to be burned alive for that, Miss Braydon. But it's your own fault for starting an argument with me. I always lose my manners when I argue. You must just forgive me. I'm sure you can without having to try very hard."

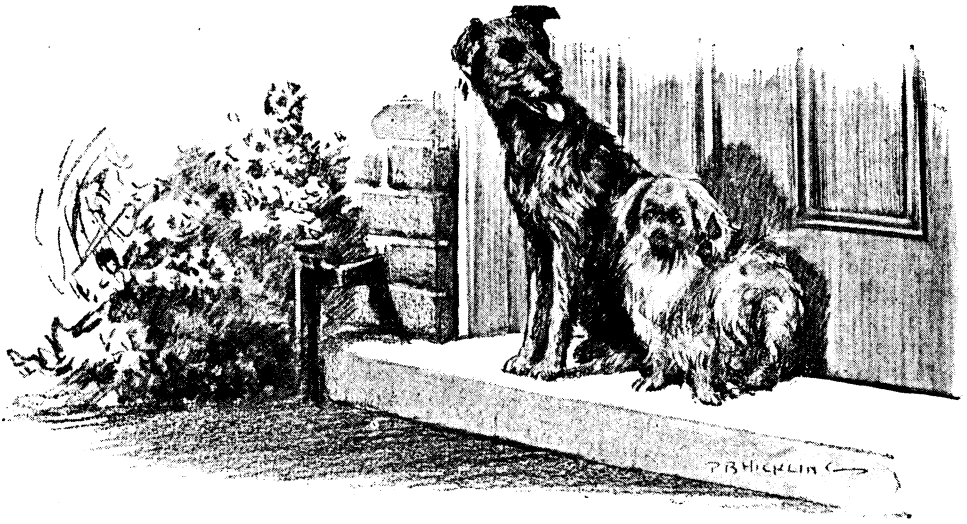
"Yes," she said, "but I must punish you too. I'm going to take some of those sketches of yours from you. This and this and this and this and this. If you'll tell me how much I owe you I'll write you a cheque now."

"They're two guineas apiece," said Evan, "but I'm afraid you can't have this one. To begin with, I want it to do a picture from it. It'll do for that, but in itself it's no good and it's not for sale. I'd have torn it up if I hadn't needed it. But you can have any of the others at once except this and this, which I want for pictures. But you can have them later on if you particularly like them."

Thus was inaugurated the friendship of Miss Braydon and Evan Baldwin, a friendship which continued till the old lady's death fifteen years later, a friendship which proved of inestimable value to Evan, both spiritually and financially, a friendship to which his very rapid advance as a painter must be largely attributed, a friendship for which Mrs. Watson, while internally she regarded it with considerable vexation, was never weary in conversation of taking the credit.

The whole Baldwin family is now infinitely grateful to her. "But for Judith Watson," they tell one another every time they meet, "Heaven knows what would have become of dear Evan! She really saved him when she brought about his friendship with that Miss Braydon of his. For in those days he was hopeless, absolutely hopeless."





"Johneen and Ming, after the first outburst, became friends."

THE YOUNG IDEA

◉ By MARY WILTSHIRE ◉

◉ ◉ ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING ◉ ◉

MISS JENNY SMITH, second English mistress at the Boroughleigh Secondary School, stood by her window and watched with interest the unloading of a furniture van at the gate of the house next door; commenting on it to Johnneen, who stood on his tiptoes doing the same.

"They've got some nice furniture," she said, as a Sheraton bookcase was lifted down and carried up the eight feet of asphalt which intersected the "front" of "garden back and front" in the houses in Haig Terrace.

"It's rather big for the house, though, I should think," as a weighty wardrobe followed the bookcase. "They won't have much room to move themselves. Don't see any sign of a piano; hope they won't mind mine; and so far, Johnneen, no cat, for which I return grateful thanks, my son, seeing that you are living next door."

Johneen smiled; he was partial to cats, when they had their backs to him and his mistress was not about.

"She's quite elderly, the Mrs. Rivers," Miss Smith continued, as a grey-headed

female figure appeared in the next-door garden. "Must be a mother, not a wife; or perhaps he has both."

She deliberated a minute, drumming her fingers on the window-sill, and looking at the clock; then:

"I think I'll do as I said, and ask the old lady if she won't come in to tea. A move is a hateful business, especially for anyone old, and it would be a bit neighbourly; they can't have any place straight to have a meal yet. No, you needn't come, Johnneen; I shan't be a minute."

She ran out bareheaded from the gate of No. 3 Haig Terrace, which rejoiced in the name of "Veronica," into the gate of "Willowdene," which was No. 4; returning a few seconds later, laughing but slightly flushed.

"Johneen, dear, the likes of us don't know what's what, clearly. The folks next door are 'class,' and it isn't the thing to be neighbourly if you haven't left cards first. Come along in, Mrs. Hare, I'm quite ready. Johnneen, there's rock-cakes for tea."

"Woof!" said Johnneen, resting a black nose on the edge of the table.

"I brought in some extra cups, Miss Jenny, as you said at dinner about asking them next door."

"Yes. Well, I did ; and I've been shown my place."

"How do you mean, Miss Jenny ?"

"Why, I went and asked the old lady ; she was standing just by the door, telling the men to be more careful with a book-case ; and she shivers up against the wall as if I was something infectious, and says, 'It is not at all necessary to trouble you, thank you ; my maid will do all I require' ; so I came home to eat the tea myself."

"Well, I do declare !" said Mrs. Hare indignantly. "The old cat ! And her maid, indeed ! A bit of a girl just left school, that's what she is, Miss Jenny, and 'twould be hard to say which was the blackest, her face or her apron."

Jenny Smith laughed.

"Oh, there, it doesn't matter," she said. "If she prefers her own tea and her own company, she can. She's too grand for the likes of me, and I'm too busy for the likes of her. I'm sorry it's people like that come next door ; still, we shan't see much of them."

Wherein she proved wrong.

She finished her tea, and started on a pile of essay corrections ; and the people next door vanished more or less from her mind ; though she raised her eyes to the window once or twice to see if the van was still there, and wondered how much more they were going to pack in. But the next morning, being Saturday, she was out in the front garden directly after breakfast with a trowel and a pair of shears ; the male member of the "Willowdene" household was taking his departure for the Bank which claimed his services through the day, but Jenny did not see why she should vary her usual procedure on that account.

She squinted across the top of the hedge unobtrusively, and saw that he looked discontented and bored, if not cross ; Mrs. Rivers was standing in the doorway, and the distance between the front doors of "Willowdene" and "Veronica" not being great, and her voice of that order that disregards onlookers, her words came clearly over to Jenny, weeding her flower-bed.

"I don't know *how* I am going to manage. There is no hot-water supply, no airing cupboard ; where I am going to keep china and linen I cannot imagine ; and as for

the grates and the general finish—I have never seen anything like them outside a labourer's cottage."

"Well, Mother, I told you what it was like, and that you had far better stay where you were, and let me go into rooms until something more suitable presented itself. You *would* come, and——"

His shrug as he opened the gate said plainly, "You have only yourself to thank for it."

The gate stuck, and he shook it viciously. His breakfast had been late, and plentifully besprinkled with the deficiencies of the house, so there was perhaps some excuse for his ill-temper ; but Jenny, unknowing, felt pleased that her overture of the previous day had been rejected. She prodded at a dandelion, unaware that Johnneen, uninterested in gardening, had pushed his nose through the dividing hedge, and was surveying the prospect. The hedge, like the rest of Haig Terrace, was very new and skimpy ; more of an empty compliment than a real division. Jenny heard a sudden wild flurry of snarls, and Johnneen sprang backwards from his observation post, with a reddish brown body hurtling through the privet stalks after him, and Mrs. Rivers piping distress in the rear. There was a whirl of legs, and then Johnneen emerged uppermost, with his two front paws planted firmly in the stomach of a Pekinese, whose language was appalling to listen to.

"Henry," came an agitated squeal from the other garden. "Oh, come quickly, Ming will be killed—oh, that *beast* of an Irish terrier—*Henry*——"

Jenny Smith's mouth tightened ; abuse of her dog was a thing she would not endure from anybody. Johnneen looked at her, ear cocked, head on one side, awaiting instructions. He did not know quite what this thing was that was kicking and swearing and snapping under his feet ; it was no make of dog that Johnneen had ever come in contact with before, though even if it had been, it was too small for him to fight ; and it was not a cat, though its swearing exceeded even that of the ginger Tom at the butcher's.

"Call your dog off, you——" hooted Ming's mistress.

Jenny Smith whistled to Johnneen, who removed his paws with an air of sublime indifference, and seized the struggling reddish-brown scrap. Its teeth entered the ball of her thumb, and when at last she managed to catch hold of the scruff of its neck, she

shook it before she handed it back to its owner.

"You should keep your dog under better control," the latter informed her severely.

"Johnneen's perfectly well-behaved," said Jenny hotly. "Heaps of dogs would have half killed a thing coming in and attacking them in their own gardens like that."

"Ming never attacks anyone."

"Well, he's attacked me, and bitten my hand," Jenny retorted, her thumb to her mouth; "and he hasn't any business over here, anyway; and he had better stay where he belongs."

"I hope"—"Henry" approached with some show of courtesy—"that you aren't really bitten?"

"Oh, I'm bitten right enough, and I'm going indoors to have it seen to. Come along, Johnneen," and Jenny departed, with her nose in the air.

She watched the doings of "Willowdene" thereafter with critical and by no means friendly eyes. She had an abiding sorrow behind her, little Jenny Smith; one of the small unimportant tragedies of small unimportant people that the great world passes by. She was the daughter of a small dairy farmer, in the green, soft Avon Vale country, that lies to the west of the Wiltshire Downs. He had died when she was only four years old, and her mother had given up the country life, and the country home that had meant so much to her, and, moving up to Swindon, had furnished a good-sized house with the small capital her husband had left her, and taken lodgers, mostly members of the office staff at the Works. In that atmosphere Jenny had grown up; and the be-all and end-all of her existence was her Mother. To work; to get on; to earn enough to make a little home, so that Mother should not always be slaving, should one day be free of Mr. Crocker who wanted his breakfast at 7.15 and other meals at correspondingly odd times, of Mr. Mullings who suffered from gastric trouble and was always on diet, of Mr. Sawyer who would not eat cold meals, of them and the scores of their kind and like who haunted her childhood and girlhood; to that end she set herself with unflinching determination. She was quick and intelligent, and she worked with a fierce intensity. Scholarships kept her at school, and took her to a training college, till behold her, at twenty-one, a full-fledged B.A. and appointed as Junior English Mistress at the Boroughleigh Secondary School. Six months in rooms there, till the little "par-

lour type" Council houses, on one of which she had set her mind—there were no other available for renting, and she could not buy—were finished, and then Mother could sell her connection, and the greater part of her furniture, and settle into a real home of her own once more.

Which Mother did, in blissful happiness; and died of bronchial pneumonia a year later.

Jenny Smith struggled on alone with what courage she could muster. The home she had made for Mother, she would keep; the furnishings might be shabby, they were things that Mother had used and handled, they two had planned their placing together; and she would not have them pass to strangers; but she lived among them with a sorely bruised heart.

That was nearly five years ago. She had come across Mrs. Hare in the second of those years; a woman equally lonely, with a tragedy of her own, who had been too thankful to find shelter and companionship, to refuse the small salary that Jenny could pay. One of the children at school had given her Johnneen when he was an adorable ball of yellow fluff, and both happenings had eased the burden; but the ache and the longing remained. It was not the home she had looked forward to, very far removed from the home she had meant to have.

And these two next door did not seem in the least to appreciate how much they had to be thankful for. A mother and son, able to live together like that, in such close and intimate companionship, should find their happiness beyond limit or compare.

Whereas, the walls between "Willowdene" and "Veronica" being excessively thin, she could not help being aware that they did not.

She could not tell who was to blame. "Henry" was certainly impatient and irritable, though she was bound to admit that he had, on occasion, a kind way with him, and that he had seemed really solicitous and concerned over her bitten hand, as they turned out of their respective garden gates on the ensuing Monday morning, which was more than could be said for Mrs. Rivers. Still, she did not approve of sons taking that attitude to their mothers. He as good as said that the old lady was a tiresome nuisance and he seemed to have very little consideration for her, while the old lady herself was captious and fault-finding to a degree. Jenny could hear her scolding the little servant—

"That poor kid has a time of it, Miss Jenny," said Mrs. Hare—and in the evening, when she was doing her corrections in the little "parlour" that backed against the little "parlour" of No. 4, her ears were assailed by a steady stream of complaints, though she did her best not to listen.

The two houses arrived at some amount of acquaintance. When one is new to a neighbourhood, one does require information about milkmen, scavengers, and such domestic matters; and though Jenny was only a Secondary School mistress, the inhabitant of No. 5 was a grocer's assistant, which was worse, so to that degree of association they arrived, albeit with much stressing of the Rivers' previous residence, the degradation of living in a locality like Haig Terrace, and considerable friction by the way.

"Your servant sits in the dining-room?" Mrs. Rivers inquired one day with frigid disapproval.

"She isn't a servant; she's a useful housekeeper; but if she had been, where else could she sit?" Jenny Smith demanded bluntly. "One could not put her in the scullery."

(She had, that morning, heard "my maid" relating to Mrs. Hare in woebegone accents how that scullery were enough to freeze the marrer in your bones.)

"Mine always does. I should certainly not have her in the dining-room."

"Well, of course it isn't really a dining-room, and these houses are not intended for people with servants." And Jenny wondered whether she dare inquire when they were going to one that was.

"We have only taken this temporarily." Mrs. Rivers was evidently a thought-reader. "My son suggested that he should go into rooms for the time being, but he suffers from indigestion——"

("And the landlady might have a daughter," Jenny added silently.)

"—so I could not dream of allowing him to do so; but we shall move as soon as possible."

"Oh yes; this is not at all suitable for you."

Jenny said it so warmly that Mrs. Rivers took on the tint of a peony, and remarked afterwards that Miss Smith had most unpleasant manners, though possibly she knew no better, and did not mean it.

There was a little difficulty also about where one side of the two twigs thick party hedge left off, and whose business it

was to cut which twig; but the chief bone of contention was Ming.

Johneen and Ming, after the first outburst, became friends. Johnneen's line of reasoning was self-evident. The thing in the next garden was ill-tempered, certainly, and impolite, but it did know some lovely cuss words, and it was not afraid of anything; so, if it claimed to be considered as a real dog, there was no harm in allowing the claim. Moreover, it was criminal of any humans to turn a dog loose on the world with no more knowledge of its highways and byways than Ming had. He had never been out by himself; he knew nothing of the joys of the Town Field the day after a Circus; of the social gatherings at the Old Wharf, where the barges loaded and unloaded, and where there were heavenly scraps over odds and ends of refuse; he was entirely ignorant of the treasure-hunt that can be conducted in a scavenging tin; he could not even dig a hole. And he was tied up with blue bows, clean ones: that alone showed his utter lack of all attempt at proper bringing up; any normal, self-respecting dog would have rolled them in the first mud-heap that came handy.

Wherefore it came about that Ireland undertook the education of Young China.

Even that would not have mattered so much. What did matter was that Young China frankly and undisguisedly enjoyed it. Day after day, despite protests and scoldings from an irate mistress, Ming managed to be on hand when the back door was left open for the butcher's boy or the baker's; and his reddish-brown body trotted solemnly and seriously down Kenya Road in the wake of Johnneen's active yellow one. Johnneen always roamed during school-hours; he owned neither allegiance nor obedience to Mrs. Hare. Ming achieved a black eye, and a torn and gory ear; he wallowed in luscious smells; his immaculate blue bows were a draggled-tailed disgrace; his tail a moth-eaten remnant; but nothing, neither perpetual combings and applications of disinfectant powder, nor bullying and sly slaps from a harassed maid, nor acid comments thrown casually over the hedge, would check his adoration of Johnneen, nor prevent him following where Johnneen led.

Jenny Smith and "Henry" had made more progress towards intimacy than the other members of their households. It was rather absurd to turn out of their respective gates at exactly the same hour every morning and not walk together to the end

of the road; and in the course of three months they had managed, during that few minutes' daily conversation, to exchange views on a variety of subjects, and find interest in so doing. Jenny's dislike was lessening, though she disapproved as strongly as ever of his attitude to his mother. It was therefore not with displeasure, though with great surprise, that she saw him turn in at the gate of "Veronica" one evening, and she left a pile of analysis books to answer the door.

He came in, and sat down by the exercise books in the "parlour" sitting-room that Jenny kept for her own use, looking uneasy; made one or two inane remarks, and came to a halt; then blurted out in a manner foreign to his usual polished bank-cashier (albeit only fourth) courtesy:

"Miss Smith, I'm afraid you will think me a nuisance, but my mother sent me in to ask if you would keep your dog shut up through the day?"

"No, I won't!" Miss Smith informed him promptly and with heat. "It is abominably cruel to keep active dogs like terriers shut up, and I'll not have Johnneen made miserable. Why did you want it, may I ask?"

"My mother's dog has taken to following him about, and comes in very wet and dirty, which is a nuisance; and as Pekinese are not particularly strong, it is too much for him."

He spoke with an irritability of which Jenny mistook the cause, and she grew increasingly annoyed. She was not of their position, and did not pretend to be; she was not on friendly terms with them, and she did not want to be, though if Henry had been different, she might have liked him. There were things she liked in him; but that they should sling their orders out like this, should interfere, and that unkindly, about the dog who was so dear a companion, was a piece of impertinence she would permit from neither of them.

"The best way out of the difficulty would be for you to keep your dog indoors," she informed "Henry" with asperity. "A dog like that would not mind it so much as a terrier."

"I know my mother is a perfect fool over the little beast, and expects everybody and everything to give way to him."

Henry Rivers sounded more irritable than ever. He had had no small discussion with his parent before he would start on this mission. He had liked his neighbour from

the first, this girl with her sweet little face, and her funny aggressive independence; he badly wanted to know her better; to be friends with her; and then for his mother to talk about the "young person next door," and badger him into this unfriendliness.

"She spoils the dog until he's a perfect pest," he rapped out savagely.

Jenny opened amazed eyes and stared at him. To talk like that of his mother to an outsider! She decided she wanted to have nothing to do with either of them. Mrs. Rivers was very attached to her son—she knew that, if she did have a queer way of showing it—and he gave her very little of his society; but on the other hand she never troubled to make herself companionable to him, and they were both of them selfish and inconsiderate.

"I dare say she finds him company when she is so much alone," Miss Smith informed her visitor frostily. "And now, if you will excuse me, I must go on with my work. I will have some wire put round the hedge, and I will do my best to keep Johnneen and your dog apart, but that is all I can promise. I will certainly not chain him up."

She stood, and he was obliged to do the same, and take his departure. Mrs. Rivers received the account of his embassy—not too pleasantly delivered—in chilly dignity. She supposed that was one of the unavoidable accompaniments of living in a cottage; one must submit to being pestered by one's neighbours. But it was most annoying that a valuable dog like Ming should be at the mercy of that wretched mongrel.

"He isn't a mongrel," her son snapped; "and it was your own doing coming here. I told you that you wouldn't like it. And next time you want the people next door interfered with, you can do it yourself."

After which there was a considerable interval of silence, and then Henry went out.

He stood outside the gate the following day to greet Jenny as usual. Jenny gave him a calm "good morning," and imitated the example of the Priest and the Levite. On the second day the incident was repeated; on the third, Henry Rivers started five minutes earlier, and waited for her at the corner of the road.

"Miss Smith, I'm afraid I've offended you."

"Not at all," Jenny countered politely. "Why?"

"I thought you didn't seem quite so friendly."

Jenny was silent ; she could not altogether deny it.

"I suppose it was over that brute of a dog ?"

Silence still.

"If you knew how I cursed at having to come in about the little beast at all ! I had so badly wanted to come and see you, and to have an errand like that the very first time—it was sickening. I've told my mother she will do that sort of thing herself in future, if she wants it done."

Another wait.

"Was it because of the dog ?"

"Not altogether." Jenny hesitated ; she was a transparent little person, and she knew it was not within her power to give an airy disclaimer to accusations of unfriendliness, and make it sound like truth. She was not friendly, and at present she felt no desire to be friendly ; with equal emphasis she did not want to explain why ; but Henry was determined not to be put off.

"If you will know," she said desperately at last. "I didn't like the way you spoke about your mother, nor the way I've often heard you speak to her, and if you were used to those ways, I didn't think there was any chance we should care to know each other. I know how my mother and I were to each other, and what it meant to me when—when she went away ; and it seems rather dreadful to me that anyone should be angry and sharp and hard with theirs. It isn't any of my business, and I didn't want to say anything about it, but so long as you asked, that's why."

She made a move to walk on, for she was hot and embarrassed and near to tears ; but he moved with her, looking blankly astonished.

"Perhaps—" he began ; then, "I expect—" which was not quite what he wanted either ; then with a gentleness that was new to him, "Tell me about your mother."

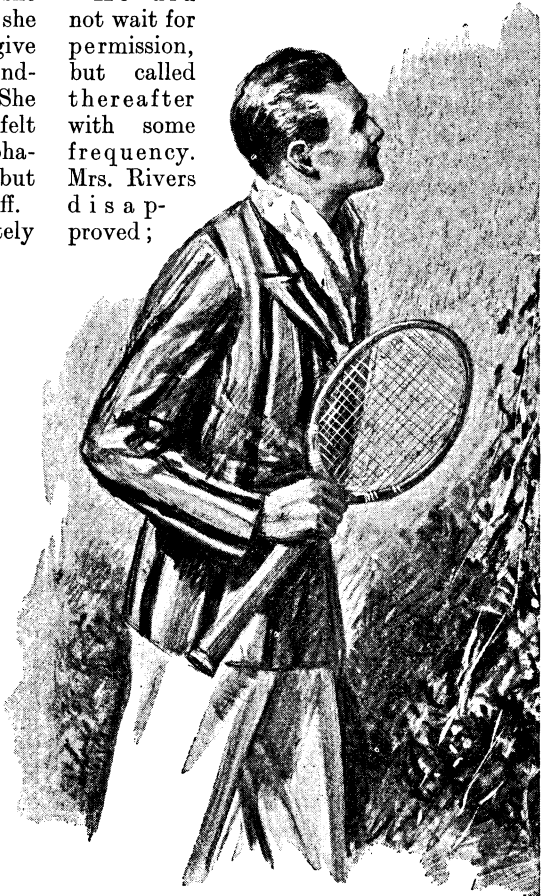
Jenny told him ; not much ; it was not a long walk to the Secondary School, and he was due at the Bank besides ; but enough to make him realise something of what the two had been to each other, of the hurt and loss that tried bravely to solace itself with Johnnie and Mrs. Hare, and with sundry small kindnesses and helps to other ships that passed in the night of unhappiness and pain ; to make him realise too, with a sense

of something missed and lacking, what a home might be where social position and social convention counted for nothing, love and companionship for everything.

He stood a moment when they arrived at the school gates, and spoke with that new gentleness still on him.

"I understand better," he said. "I'm afraid my mother and I were never like that ; I'm afraid we never should be ; but it must be a great thing to have had that feeling, even if there's only a memory of it left. May I come and see you again, Miss Smith ? And will you tell me more ?"

He did not wait for permission, but called thereafter with some frequency. Mrs. Rivers disapproved ;



"'Are you contemplating a burglary ?' asked an amused voice behind her."

Jenny intimated clearly that friendship with the male portion only of a family did not appeal to her ; he was impervious to hints, deaf to requests, and he always had some good reason for coming ; generally to seek Young China, whose education progressed apace.

Ming conceived an adoration for Jenny, second only to his adoration for Jenny's dog. This was a kindred spirit, such as he

times a week she would find a red-brown attendant shadow waiting on her doorstep by Johnneen, both equally quivering with joy at her return.

The climax came one Saturday afternoon, when she had occasion to visit her laundress. The woman lived in an old part of the town, in a street of what had once been good-sized houses, which had now fallen to decay and of which the remnants had been patched up and turned into



"She explained the situation briefly, and his smile faded. He did not fancy the position exactly, but he was not going to let Jenny Smith tackle it alone."

had never dreamed before could exist in a human. Jenny wire-netted her garden, and tried to "shoo" him off; it was useless. She could not prevent errand-boys leaving the gates open; and on an average four

cottages. Jenny had Johnneen with her; he never made the slightest attempt to follow her on school days; but he also never allowed her to go out alone on Saturday afternoon. She might play tennis

in the evening; Saturday afternoon was his and they would go for a walk.

She noticed, as she stood on Mrs. Hibberd's doorstep, that the next cottage was untenanted, wondering why Johnneen began to snuffle round its door in an odd uneasy way, and commented on the fact to Mrs. Hibberd.

"They moved out a-Tuesday, Miss, and glad enough we were to see them go, the dirty drinking lot. 'Tis let again, Miss, to Mrs. May's daughter, that married on to one of the Avon bus-drivers, but it have got to be done up first. Oh, they were a lot, them folks; he did knock her about, and she did knock the kids about; there weren't no peace for anybody with all the shouting and swearing as did go on."

Johnneen came up to Jenny with a distressful whimper, then returned to the door again.

"And when they couldn't be hitting nought else, they'd be hitting the cat, and I believe as they've left the poor beast shut in there, Miss; she were near her kitting, and I've thought several times as I heard her crying."

Jenny had been listening idly, waiting for an interval in the flow, in which to state why she had come. She pulled herself sharply to attention.

"You mean to say," she asked, horror-stricken, "that there's an animal in that house, with no food or anything?"

"I'm afraid so, Miss; I did go up to Mr. Carter, what collects the rents, two nights ago, to see if he'd bring the key down and open the door, but he were away, and I can't get in at the back; the wall between be too high. 'Twere big gardens here once, you see, Miss, and the old walls do still stand."

Jenny turned and surveyed the cottage front. The door was the original one, old and solid; it was beyond her strength to break it in. The window was more hopeful. It also was the original one; low from the ground, and with a wide sill on which one could stand to reach the hasp through a broken pane. She wrapped her handkerchief round her hand and prepared to attack the window. Mrs. Hibberd looked on, partly in dismay, partly in admiration; Johnneen gave an approving bark.

"Are you contemplating a burglary?" asked an amused voice behind her, and she turned to find Henry Rivers at her elbow, on his way to the Tennis Club, to which this old street was the shortest, though not the pleasantest road.

She explained the situation briefly, and his smile faded. He did not fancy the position exactly, but he was not going to let Jenny Smith tackle it alone. He was perfectly aware that where an animal was concerned she would neither wait nor consider consequences; and seeing that, whatever the excuse, she was going to break into someone else's property, the owner might be disagreeable over it.

"I think," he told her, "my racquet handle would be a better weapon," and smashed a pane of glass without more ado, though annoyedly conscious of an increasing assembly of shrill-voiced urchins in the background, directing and explaining. He got the window open without much difficulty, and Jenny Smith was inside before he had time to stop her. Johnneen was first, however, leading the way into some back premises with sure dog instinct. Henry Rivers heard a whine and a bark, then an exclamation of horror and pity from the girl; and stepped inside the window to go and see what she had found.

She was in the kitchen, on her knees on the filthy floor, Johnneen beside her, shivering and shrinking, though he would not turn back, both looking at a terrible scarecrow of a cat, very near to death, who was gazing with awful tragic eyes at two blind starved kittens. She had dragged herself near to what had evidently been the food cupboard; it was empty; the remains of two mice lay on the floor, but of other nourishment there was none. In her extremity, she did not even resent Johnneen; she only recognised that help had come at last.

Jenny Smith got to her feet; the tears were running down her face, but there was no time to waste.

"The black kitten is dead," she said, "and I'm afraid the mother's too far gone to save, though I'm going to try; but the tabby one is alive. Mrs. Hibberd will have some milk, and I wonder if you would mind going to the public-house opposite for a little brandy? Guard, Johnneen!"

She was in the front room, climbing out through the window as she spoke. He did not much care for his errand—the public-house had not a savoury reputation, and for a bank-cashier who greatly considered appearances to walk across a slummy street carrying brandy in a tea-cup, required courage—but he ploughed his way obediently through the mass of children and down-at-heel women outside, returning with the

brandy to find Jenny already at work, moistening the mouths of the mother cat and the one live kitten with milk. It might have been a sort of horrible travesty of a picture of motherhood, he thought ; that evil-smelling, frowzy place, the poor little dead kitten stretched out on the stones, and the girl crouched down over the hardly alive one and its mother, with that intent brooding care in her face. There was no travesty in her part of the scene, at all events ; what a mother she would make, he thought, and how she would work, and fight and strive for those she loved.

"Thank you very much," she said over her shoulder, as she took the brandy from him. "And now, you need not stay from your tennis any longer. I can manage quite well."

"I'd rather stay with you," he said. He had travelled far on a strange road in the last quarter of an hour, but he did not want to turn back.

"Couldn't you take them into the cottage next door ?" he asked after a period of watching. "They seem to be reviving."

"They are too weak to be moved yet. The mother would be scared of a strange place, and she hasn't the strength to stand any fright."

"Do you think she will live ?"

"I hope so."

He looked on for a while longer, then had an idea for her comfort, and went out again, looking at the front door as he passed, to see if there was any chance of exit that way ; but it was firmly locked. There were marks on it where the cat had tried to claw her way out, he noticed, and hoped Jenny would not turn her eyes that way ; it would only upset her.

Appearances did not enter his head this time, and he returned in ten minutes with a big bundle of straw, without a thought that he was making himself conspicuous. He arranged the straw, put Jenny on it, then, with infinite care, the cats ; knelt down to help her with her feeding operations, and they continued the minute doses of milk and brandy for another hour, Johnneen sitting by them and licking the mother at intervals with a warm friendly tongue.

"I hope," said Jenny, "that very soon now I shall be able to move them ; the mother is certainly stronger, and if I stay with her a while until she is used to Mrs. Hibberd, she won't be frightened."

"I don't think anything that was small and weak would be frightened when you

were by, Jenny," he ventured in a low voice, and she flushed vividly ; but there was a sweetness in this close new intimacy that pity had brought to them, and she uttered no protest.

She stood up at length.

"I think I might venture to take them in now," she said, "if I am very careful. You *have* been good, Mr. Rivers."

"Henry," he corrected.

She looked up and down, the flush back again, but a troubled one.

"Your mother would not like it," she told him worriedly.

"You have taught me," said Henry Rivers, "what one owes to one's mother ; I shall never forget the lesson ; but we shall never be close companions now, we have grown too far apart. If I had learnt years ago, it might have been different. I don't know ; my home was never like yours ; but it will never be different now. Still, even supposing it was, my mother would have to come second to—may I say it, Jenny ?—my wife."

He waited, watching the girl beside him tremble and whiten with a catching intake of the breath. He had chosen what was the wisest, best course for everyone concerned. His mother would not be pleased at first ; but she would be far more comfortable back in Cheltenham among her old circle of friends, than in these uncongenial surroundings ; they would be on much more affectionate terms apart than together, for try how he might, he could not seem to prevent friction when they were under one roof. For himself, it would mean joy and gladness that made him tingle and glow to think of ; and to Jenny it should bring—he vowed it humbly and unselfishly—a happiness that was true and real and lifelong, if human agency could make it so ; if only—

"Jenny, what do you say ?" he urged.

There was a sound of frantic scrambling at the window of the front room ; little cager whines and snuffles ; a wilder scramble and a bump, a sharp voice outside calling to "Ming," and Young China shot madly through the door, careering like a crazy thing round Jenny and Johnneen, and yelping with joy. The mother cat spat feebly ; Johnneen wavered for an instant, drawn to his chum, then pressed closer to her, protecting her with his fine gentlemanliness, while "Ming ! Ming !" sounded from outside the window in a voice that both the humans recognised.

Henry Rivers muttered something under his breath that it was as well only the powers of the air heard.

"Go and explain to her," Jenny told him. "I'll bring the cat and the kitten."

She stooped and lifted them tenderly, caressing and talking crooningly, and the miniature procession formed. Mrs. Rivers, outside the window where her dog had suddenly disappeared, after a lunatic rush down the street which had made her hot and angry, saw coming towards her in this incredibly sordid-looking cottage, first, her son, his immaculate flannels grimed and stained, and bits of straw sticking out of the pocket of his blazer; secondly, Miss Smith, face and pale blue frock equally dirty, carrying a disreputable cat; an indefinable something in the attitude and manner of both of them that made her set her teeth sharply; thirdly—she might have known he would be in it somewhere—the cause of all the mischief, the head and chief of all the offending since they came to Boroughleigh, the "beast of an Irish terrier"; but—no Ming.

"Henry!" she exclaimed; a dictionary of social etiquette could not have contained more than the one word. Henry began to explain, while Jenny, judging herself not wanted by certainly one of the company, stepped to the window.

"No; wait a minute," the man interposed. "I can tell you the rest later. Before you go, Jenny—Mother, I have just asked Miss Smith to marry me."

Jenny gasped; so did Mrs. Rivers.

"Really, Henry—to make such an announcement in such a place—I was looking for that tiresome dog, who has run away

from me—what did Miss Smith reply, may I ask?"

Her voice was not encouraging. Jenny shrank a little, clasping the cats closer; Henry grasped her arm.

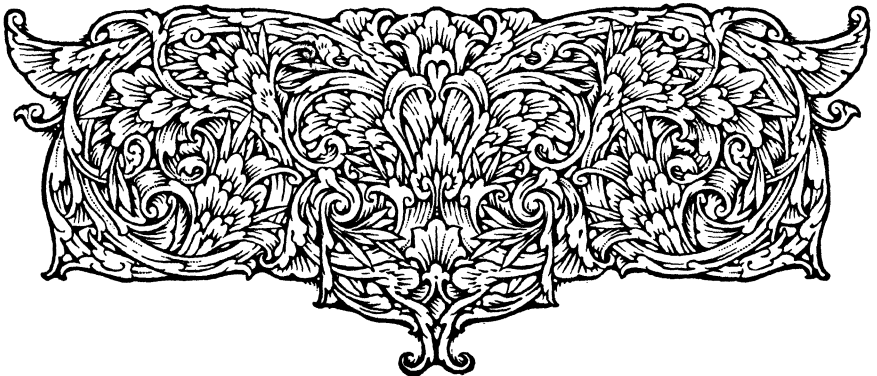
"She has accepted me," he said with a world of proud triumph, his eyes daring her to contradict him.

And Jenny Smith, of the aggressive independence, of the meticulous accuracy, let him say it; even let her eyes tell his that she did not want to contradict.

There was an awkward silence, which was bridged over by Ming. Mrs. Hibberd had said, and truly, that the previous inhabitants of the cottage were dirty souls. Ming had been routing in the corners of the scullery where coal ashes and household refuse mingled choicely. He now emerged.

What was his object, who can tell? Whether in the unfathomable depths of his Oriental mind he had foreseen the coming separation, and wished to ensure that he should remain on the Boroughleigh side of it, whether he wished to make amends to his former source of all authority for his defection, and the many slights he had put on her, whether he had simply acquired some of Johnneen's generosity, none can say. He was carrying what had once been the bone of a shoulder of mutton, and was now a corrupt mass; it was heavy for him, but he persevered bravely; managed somehow to heave his plump little body out over the window-sill again, and laid his treasure, with the air of one who gives untold wealth, across Mrs. Rivers' grey suède shoes.

The education of Young China was complete.





THE DANCERS.

BY MURIEL KENT.

BY one of childhood's sudden whims,
Or moved by Nature's rhythmic call,
They poised their slender, rounded limbs
In beauty on the wide sea-wall.

I know not where they learned the pose
To which they gave a childish grace—
What primal impulse in them rose
And held each dancer in her place.

In scanty robes of red or blue,
Or green, disclosing sunburnt knees,
They seemed to my enchanted view
Like figures on a Grecian frieze.

Clear-cut against the morning light,
Each laid a finger on her lip,
As nymphs that hold a magic rite
May pause in silence ere they trip.

All rapt they stood, and unaware
That mortal eyes had seen their art ;
But I, who watched the dancers there,
Still keep the vision in my heart.

HALLAN'S WIFE

• By STEPHEN PHILLIPS •

• ILLUSTRATED BY DUDLEY TENNANT •

FORDYCE smiled with a kind of grim appreciation when his keen grey eyes picked out the shape of the cabin under the pines. Its smoke, pencilled thinly against the leaden skies, had guided him across the whiteness with the directness of a bird's flight. For something had told him all along that it was Hallan's cabin. And Hallan was the man Fordyce intended to kill.

He paused on a snow-powdered crest and shook the clinging ice-particles from his furs. His face had become as expressionless as a mask. Only in his eyes twin-flames burned with a subdued and breathless steadiness. He was not excited, or even moved at all. In fact he was rather horribly cool and collected.

Funny! He had never imagined one would feel like that when one came to the point of taking life—even such a worthless life as Hallan's. Still, it was better that way, much better—no beastly fuss or anything like that. Just a mere ordinary, matter-of-fact sort of thing—like changing one's collar or putting out the gas. At any rate, there would be no taint of cheap theatricality in this little affair. Fordyce abhorred tawdriness. It should prove a perfectly straightforward matter. No need for explanations, no mistakes; above all, no mistakes.

Well, he might as well get it over and be done with it.

Quietly he slipped down the ridge towards the cabin. Twenty paces from it he paused—paused with a swift and rather curious abruptness.

Through the silence had come a sweet, trembling note of melody, clear as the morning song of a bird, tender as the whisper of a lover in the falling light.

Once, O wonder!

Once, from the ashes of my heart,
Arose a blossom—

Fordyce stood with head flung up and hands clenched tightly at his sides. It was

a violin that he could hear—and the song came from the lips of a woman.

Instinctively, as he stood there, Fordyce sensed the sadness in that voice, the tragedy—and yet, greater even than the sadness and tragedy, he sensed the strange, steady courage of the singer.

The melody died away like the white wings of a bird hurrying through golden skies and Fordyce moved to the door, and rapped upon it. Presently, after the slightest of pauses, it opened. He saw a woman standing there, looking at him. She was quite young. Her hair was dark and coiled over the top of her head. Her face was pale, almost transparent in texture, and her eyes seemed quiet, unflinching, and level. She was hardly beautiful, Fordyce thought, yet she possessed something more potent than beauty. A living flame—the flame of faith, hope and charity—seemed to burn and flicker within. It looked out from her eyes, it smiled at the edges of her mouth—it moved, sweet and gentle, in the tips of her long, slender fingers, fastened tightly about the violin bow.

"What do you want?" she asked.
"Where have you come from?"

He nodded slowly across his shoulder.
"I have come from out of the silence," he said, "and so to the silence I shall return."

Her hand flew to her throat. For an instant, he saw fear in her eyes. Then it went. They grew steady again, calm, strangely level as they gazed back into his.

"I'm afraid that's rather epigrammatic, isn't it?" she commented, and laughed quickly, softly—a laugh that caught in her throat and died suddenly away, as if stifled there invisibly.

"No," said Fordyce, "it's the holiest truth. May I come in?"

She hesitated. He could feel the searching intensity of her level gaze upon his face. He smiled grimly, wondering if she were alone. No, not alone. One did not leave a woman in a place like that—alone.

He stepped slowly inside as she made way for him, peering sharply into the shadows. But there was no sign of Hallan there. The cabin was empty, save for himself and the woman. He wondered idly who she was and what she was doing there—if, indeed, he had not been mistaken in believing this to be Hallan's home.

He walked to the stove and stood staring fixedly into its redness. The warmth was pleasant after the extreme cold. The extremities of his body felt badly chilled. He had come a long way, through country strange to him, and with the ice already starting to thaw at the end of the long freeze. The river—and instinct—had carried him through. Yet he had begun to hate the river long before the end of his journey. Its windings had seemed endless, putting him in a state of constant bewilderment. There had been an element of danger, too. He had realised that. The surface ice was already growing brittle in places. He had been glad to get away from it at last—to seek refuge on higher, firmer ground.

The woman spoke doubtfully through the little silence.

"Will you eat something? I'll heat up some coffee for you, shall I?"

"No," he said.

He did not want Hallan's coffee. One could not partake of the bread and salt of a man one intended to kill. Common decency forbade that.

He heard her close the door reluctantly upon the great whiteness without. Standing there beside the stove, Fordyce felt the silence of those far, lonely places close in upon them both, like the lid of the world shutting down, locking with a click. He saw the woman give a little shiver as she turned swiftly to the narrow window, looking out. Night was coming to the solitudes. Deep-hushed and blue-veined they spread towards the roof of the world. Soon, over the twisted pinewood edges, would come leaping the red mad god of the aurora's fire. Yet; in that instant, Fordyce felt grateful for the interval of changing lights, of slipping shades. He was glad to know that his face was hidden in the curtain of gloom flung past the narrow window.

"You were playing—when I came," he remarked, with a curious gentleness.

She did not turn. Her eyes were fixed in a strange, far-away stare. But she made a grave little inclination of the head.

"To yourself?" he asked.

"Yes. I do—often. It keeps me from

imagining things when I am alone. Horrible things! The loneliness, the silence—One might go mad."

"A woman, easily," he agreed. "But do you mean you are alone here—absolutely?"

"Yes," she admitted, with a curious listlessness, "alone—absolutely. Sometimes the silence tries to terrify me, but I always fight it tooth and nail. I am not afraid—*really*."

Slowly Fordyce removed his fur cap, hanging it on a nail above the stove. The woman had turned. He felt her eyes watching him again with that hard intensity. He began to unlace his heavy snow-boots, pulling forward the long wooden seat. A small stone lamp, one of the first of its kind, stood on the four coarse-fibred planks which served for a table.

"Hadn't we better have a light?" he inquired. The persistence of her stare irritated him a little.

But she made no movement towards the lamp. Her arms had fallen at her sides with a peculiar limpness. He could even hear the deep regularity of her breathing as she stood there in the red-splashed gloom.

Presently, breaking the silence between them, she said:

"I suppose you're Alex Fordyce?"

She spoke almost casually, without emotion, but again that quick look of fear had flashed and died in her eyes. Fordyce, staring fixedly into the stove, did not observe it.

"Yes," he said, "I'm Alex Fordyce. And you?"

She answered reluctantly.

"I am Hallan's wife."

Fordyce looked up slowly. He could not see her face—merely the vague outline of her slender shape shining palely against the cabin wall.

"I see. And Hallan—where is he?"

She made a little gesture that might have meant anything—or nothing.

"And Hallan," he repeated inexorably, "where is he?"

She answered then, a peculiar note of defiance, of antagonism, in her voice.

"He should be returning from Lost Province now. He went to take in his pelts. He has been trapping this part of the country, you see."

Fordyce laughed shortly.

"For money? Surely he has plenty of that—other people's!"

"No, not for money. Merely for—amuse-

ment's sake. One must do something in a place of this sort, mustn't one?"

"I suppose so." He looked at her through hard, narrowed eyes. "You don't like it here?"

She laughed—and there was a little note of hysteria in her laughter.

"Like it? Surely you are jesting! How can you imagine I could ever like it?"

"I can't," he admitted frankly. "I am sorry if I have been the cause of driving you to it."

She said nothing to that. He peered at her rather uneasily. He had nothing against this woman. It was Hallan he wanted. What a shame to subject a woman to this sort of thing! The mere thought of it disgusted Fordyce, filled him with a cold, animal fury. It was just the kind of thing Hallan would do, of course—selfish, greedy, unscrupulous to the last. And with a coward's streak somewhere. A coward—there was nothing on earth Fordyce loathed more than that. He could have forgiven Hallan almost anything else—Hallan, who had once been his friend.

"When do you expect him back, then?"

"I don't know—quite. It may take him two days longer. He stays sometimes at Lost Province."

"To drink and cheat, I suppose." Fordyce's voice expressed a fierce repugnance. "Oh, well, the day of reckoning is pretty near for him—now!"

She was silent. Night had wrapped itself about the little cabin now. Idly he watched the lights play against the narrow window, hurrying torchlights of green and red and yellow. The hard pinelogs smoked and hissed in the stove. The sound of their burning was flung up to beat frantically against the shut lid of the world. He could imagine how the silence could jeer when one was alone—jeer and gibber and gesticulate.

He glanced at the woman. In her attitude, now that the lights of the frozen wild played about her, he sensed a peculiar air of fatalism.

"When he returns," she asked quietly, "what then?"

Slowly he stood up, looking at her through the changing lights.

"I had intended shooting him," he told her, in slow, even tones. "In point of fact, I decided to do that the very night he ruined me, but he really gave me very little chance. I suppose he fled straight to this outlandish spot?"

"Yes," she said, nodding, "and I came to share the outlandishness of it with him."

He regarded her frowningly.

"You must care a great deal to have done that."

"Oh, I don't know." Her voice was flat, toneless. "I think it was just that I—pitied him."

"A coward deserves no pity."

He saw her flinch at that and was sorry—not for Hallan's sake but for hers. It was she that needed compassion, not Hallan.

He spoke with sudden harshness.

"He was my friend. I trusted him. He abused that trust—shamelessly. Yet one might have forgiven the disloyalty. The coward's streak—never!"

She was watching the lights play across the twisted pinetops. Her mind bridged the lone white distances between the cabin and Lost Province, where Hallan had gone with his dog-team. Fordyce watched her with a musing contemplation. He had no need to test her courage. Yet he wondered that she should ever have married a man like Hallan—cursed with the loathsome coward's streak. What right had he, or any man, to bring a woman to the heart of these lone, ice-swept silences—to leave her alone, without protection or any kind of companionship, utterly at the mercy of the wild and her own imaginings? Was such a man deserving of any pity?

Certainly, in that moment, Fordyce was not prepared to extend clemency. He was quite sure in his own mind that he would shoot Hallan.

He gave a little start as she put a flame to the lamp's wick. There was loose wood in a corner. He rose and gathered an armful, pushing it into the stove. He heard her walk to the door, heard the click of the latch as it flew open. He looked round, feeling the piercing bitterness of the wind as it swirled and eddied about his legs.

"I had better feed the dogs," she said, in her quiet, even fashion. "We keep two teams here, you see. Sometimes"—there was a curious expression in her eyes as she looked at him—"sometimes accidents happen."

His mind lingered rather curiously on those words when he was alone. What had she meant?

He felt strangely restless, ill at ease. He went to the door and stared out. The glitter of the snow hurt his eyes, still sore from recent exposure. The pines were like strange, statuesque figures, mantled in white.

He shut the door, shivering a little, used as he had become to that pitiless climate. It was not only the cold which had sent that quick shiver through him, rather the thought of what Hallan's wife must have suffered amid those far-flung wastes—suffered in silence and without complaint, urged to endure by a sublime sense of loyalty to this man who, apparently, considered her not at all.

Why was it that men like Hallan

faint, elusive smile at the edges of her mouth. Only in that smile could Fordyce discover any trace of the tragedy which surrounded her.

Presently, rendered drowsy by the heat from the stove, he slept. The little stone lamp was flickering out when he awoke and the first pale threads of a new day had come to lean lightly against the



"The sound of golden melody awakened him with a little start of surprise, of bewilderment, and he saw the woman standing there in the red gleam of the fire, the small brown violin beneath her chin."

always seemed to find the best women?

Furtively he sat watching her as she moved quietly about the cabin, trimming the lamp, wiping tin plates, carefully, quietly arranging the scanty furniture, her pale, transparent-skinned face quite serene and tranquil, her eyes seemingly untroubled, a

window. Hallan's wife was resting in a chair by the table. Her long, slender arms lay across the rough woodwork and her dark-haired head had fallen upon them. She slept quietly, peacefully, like a tired child. She had not intended to sleep, or she might have retired to the small bedroom at the back. The tension of circumstances had made her sleep so deeply.

The store of wood needed replenishing. Fordyce took his furs from the nail where they hung and went out into the snow. The cold took away his breath for an instant. He paused to steady himself, and then went on, choosing his way with care, for in places the snow had become deep and treacherous. He found an axe in one of the outhouses. With a grim, ironic smile, he set to work to split Hallan's rough timber into logs. Presently he paused to fill his pipe, feeling in his pockets for a match. He could find none, and remembered, as he stood sucking his unresponsive pipe, having used his last one in making a fire an hour's journey from Hallan's cabin. He had been rather fortunate to find sanctuary there for the time being. Without fire a man could not exist for long in those pitiless white wastes. The cold would creep upon him and the feeble life-flame in his body would soon flicker out.

Two hours later he was topping the ridge, high above Hallan's cabin, when he came to a sudden pause, staring in blank amazement and unbelief.

Far, far below him, Hallan's cabin was wrapped in flames.

Bewildered, with a sense of horror growing upon him, he began to lurch and stumble downward. Hallan's wife stood beneath the sentinel pines, from which, melted by the intense heat, the snows dripped with a melancholy music. She made no movement. She did not even glance at him as he went running and panting towards her.

One look was sufficient. The cabin, and all it held, was utterly destroyed.

Fordyce stood still a moment, breathing heavily, then he began to push his way through the snow towards her. In the thin blue shadow of the woods he saw Hallan's other sled, with the dogs already harnessed to it. She had packed provisions into it, cooking utensils, blankets. The truth of it all flashed itself suddenly through his brain. He swung round, glaring at the woman.

"So it's your doing, is it?" he demanded roughly.

He watched that thin, tragic smile flit over her face, leaving it cold, white, untouched by emotion.

"Yes," she said, "it's my doing. I should have done it long ago, only I could never have found my way back alone." She made a listless little gesture. "I couldn't have stood it much longer. My nerves would have given way." With a kind of awful fascination, she turned and gazed at the burning cabin. "I poured oil

from one of the cans over the stove. It blazed in an instant. The wood was so dry."

He gave a short, grim laugh.

"I see! And was that the only reason which prompted you to set the cabin on fire—fear of your nerve giving way?"

Her eyes gazed back into his with a peculiar steadiness.

"No," she said, "that was not the *only* reason."

Fordyce's expression had grown brooding and bitter.

"You think to save him from me by what you have done, no doubt. You know very well that we can't stay here—that we must push on at once—while the food lasts."

"Yes, I thought of that," she admitted quietly.

He thrust his hard face close to hers.

"Of course, you thought of it! But you won't save him that way! We shall make for Lost Province—along the river! Oh, we shall stick close to the river—mighty close!"

Hallan must return with his dog-team along the river.

She smiled at him in that cold, detached fashion of hers, offering no comment, and Fordyce turned his back upon her, snatching up the long whip from the sled. There was a dull rage smouldering in him. Why should she have been willing to go to such lengths in order to save a man of Hallan's breed from the fate he so richly merited? Hallan, the traitor, the liar, and the coward; Hallan, who was eaten up by greed and selfishness, and had no sense of honour at all. What could have prompted her to take such a tremendous risk? Surely it could not have been—affection? Yet, even as Fordyce asked himself the question, he knew the answer to it. It was her sense of loyalty to the man she had married. Just that and nothing more.

Fiercely he sent the long whip curling and cracking over the dogs. They leapt eagerly forward, straining at the harness-rope. He did not glance at the woman as they slipped across the ridge above Hallan's flaming cabin, heading for the river. Her sacrifice—if sacrifice it might be called—would probably be quite in vain. For Hallan must return that way—along the river. Somewhere across those strange, brooding white silences, they would meet, he and Hallan. And, while he loathed and hated Hallan, Fordyce yet felt a vague stirring of pity in his heart for Hallan's wife.

She was quietly splendid. He admired her steadiness of outlook, the cold, calm purity of her courage, her utter remoteness from those things which both perplexed and emotionalised his own being. She was of the North, and yet not of it. Her detachment was more an isolation of the senses than any physical barrier. She spoke seldom, moving beside the sled with eyes fixed steadily on the dark skyline, as if she saw things there which were invisible to him. That did not surprise Fordyce at all. He had thought from the very beginning that her eyes could see things which were hidden from his own less sensitive vision—beautiful, tragic things—things like her own self. For there was both a great beauty and a great tragedy in Hallan's wife.

The cold was severe. Long before they struck the river, Fordyce had felt the breath floating up like a white cloud to freeze upon his eyebrows, until each movement of the skin became sheer torture. The atmosphere was so thin that it hurt his lungs, which were assailed by a most unpleasant feeling of congestion, as if they were shutting up inside him. Compassionately he watched the woman. Never once did he see her flinch or turn away. No word of complaint ever left her lips. She seemed to move automatically, as if under a force of propulsion hardly provided by her own inadequate strength.

Fordyce never ceased to marvel silently at that strength. Where did she get it from? She was taken from a frail mould, a clear, quiet essence. Yet she revealed no sign of tiredness or exhaustion. It was almost as if she had steeled that strange, remote mind of hers against all feeling, all pain, all hardship—as if, because of that which she had already endured, her mind and body had become impervious to further suffering.

Always her eyes were fixed ahead in a strange, level stare—searching the tumbled whiteness for the first dim speck of Hallan and his dog-team. There was irony in that—and a wild, panting horror. Fordyce was like Fate itself. The set, grim mask of his face, utterly expressionless, without the least vestige of emotion visible in it, seemed suggestive of a greater horror than any wild outburst of animal rage. His eyes held the cold white glitter of some terrible purpose.

Hallan's wife stood watching him as he collected twigs for a fire, her arms hanging loosely at her sides, her eyes quite serene and unfathomable. He glanced up sud-

denly as he knelt in the snow above the little heap of twigs.

"I suppose, since you were so admirably thorough in providing for our journey, you did not forget to put in some matches?" he asked dryly.

He saw her stiffen curiously. For a moment, as he watched her, that peculiar remoteness seemed to slip away from her, and she became alive, vital, a creature pulsating with storm and passion.

"Matches?" she said. "*Matches!*"

Slowly, staring at her, he rose to his feet. His voice, piercing sharply through the heavy stillnesses all about, seemed eerily high-pitched, almost unreal.

"D'you mean—you *forgot*?"

He watched that thin, fatalistic smile go creeping idly to the edges of her mouth. Her remoteness stung him almost to an unreasoning fury. His hands reached out, gripping her by the shoulders, shaking her.

"Why don't you answer me? You know what it means, don't you? If we don't have fire——"

He broke off, letting her go, shrugging his shoulders with a kind of helpless fury at the ironic turn of Fate. No matches! How farcical! Hallan would have the laugh of him, after all! A scurvy trick for chance to play upon a man!

He spun round. Hallan's wife had taken something from her pocket. She was staring at it with a kind of fascination. Fordyce snatched the tiny cardboard box, spilling a couple of red-tipped matches on to the snow. He bent quickly and picked them up. Their preciousness could not be matched by gold.

"Two matches!" he said huskily. "*Two* of them!"

He began to laugh, quickly, jerkily, checking himself when she stared at him and, walking away quickly to the pile of twigs, knelt there. He watched the tiny flame sparkle and spread, his lips ironically twisted, his heavy brows furrowed by a deep, frowning anger.

Hallan's wife came and stood over the blaze, looking into it with that strange, fixed stare, her small, pale face destitute of all emotion. Once, as he turned to pour steaming coffee into one of the tin mugs, he caught her looking at him with her unfathomable eyes. He could not tell what her thoughts were. They were like shapeless pieces of the great silence locked away in some dim, motionless room. She sat sipping the coffee he had made and looking

away across the stillness. Fordyce fed the dogs and heaped up the fire, crouching close beside it.

Night was drawing on. The pale, heatless sun dropped into the misty blue of the woods. The cold grew to be a savage, untamed thing, stabbing through the very soul. The wind, sleepless and piercing, made a melancholy music in the low white branches, and the loosening snow fluttered down like falling, white-winged birds. And presently, from out of the great silence, came the mournful howl of a lone timber wolf, hunting the forest trails for meat.

A little shudder passed through Hallan's wife at the sound and Fordyce smiled grimly. He got up and fetched more wood, piling up the fire, so that the melting snows on branches overhead began to drip eerily through the shining gloom. He took blankets from the sled and spread them for her beside the fire. He wondered when Hallan would come. It would be a pity if he delayed too long. One match would never carry them through to Lost Province. Hallan might escape, after all. It was on the knees of the gods—those strange, mystic gods of the Northern snows.

Brooding in the stillness, he must have fallen asleep. The sound of golden melody awakened him with a little start of surprise, of bewilderment, and he saw the woman standing there in the red gleam of the fire, the small brown violin beneath her chin. Her fur hood had fallen from her head while she played, letting loose her shining blue-black hair. Her eyes were unusually large, full of a sparkling mysticism. Her long, slender fingers fluttered with a spiritual ecstasy which filled him with wonderment.

Marvelling at the clear, sweet purity of her melody, he yet marvelled still more at her own shapeliness and fragrance. She placed the violin in the snow and looked down levelly into his upturned face. Some of the grimness seemed to have left it. A curious little smile, with both amusement and gentleness in it, crinkled his lips.

"You're an extraordinary woman," he said slowly, almost grudgingly. "You seem to remind me of Destiny."

"You think Destiny might be a woman, sometimes?" she asked gravely.

"Yes, often," he declared. "We're all a part of Fate. You believe in that?"

She nodded.

"Oh yes, I believe that what is to be will be—that nothing can alter it in the very least!"

"Does such a conviction strengthen you, give you courage?"

She seemed to be considering that in her quiet, grave fashion. At last, hesitatingly, she said:

"Why, I should imagine it does. I never thought of it before in that way, but——" She paused, making a little gesture. "To be a fatalist, one must resign one's self to all manner of things—utterly and completely. And, if one can do that, one finds the true, real tranquillity of life."

"Yes, that is the most remarkable thing about you, I think," commented Fordyce. "I mean, your tranquillity."

He watched the sensitive colour steal gently beneath the clear transparency of her skin. Something seemed to kindle into life in her eyes—an eager, bright and ardent flame. Yet, in an instant, the flame had died. She turned listlessly and stared towards the skyline, low and heavy, for another day had already broken. Through the long night Fordyce had felt the wind rising gradually. Now its bitterness made breathing actually painful. It lifted the loose, powdered snow along the frozen waterway, along which they went almost without speech. Persistently Fordyce's keen vision swept the vast white spaces for sign of Hallan and his dog-team, but, out there, nothing seemed to stir—nothing. The lone places were hushed and unpeopled, inscrutable as Fate itself.

Immersed in the uneasiness of his own thoughts, Fordyce hardly knew how the accident happened. He heard a sharp, splitting sound, felt the ice give suddenly beneath him. His right leg dropped almost to the thigh through the splintered ice-hole. The sled went on, overturning against the high river-bank, and he heard the sharp, shrill yelping of the dogs as they strove vainly to tear themselves free from the twisted traceline.

Frantically he pulled his leg from the hole, scrambling up the bank. His leggings had begun to stiffen ominously before he had gone a dozen paces. Jerking the knife from his belt, he began to hack and cut into the hardening fabric, while the woman, her face even more transparent-looking than ever, ran quickly to gather dry twigs to make a fire.

With his face grim and set, Fordyce took the little blue box from his pocket. He stood for an instant staring at the solitary match between his fingers. Looking up, his eyes met those of Hallan's wife. Slim,

calm, fatalistic, she stood looking at him.

"If it were to go out——" he suggested, with a frozen smile.

She did not speak. He could not tell what her thoughts were—even if she had any thoughts at all.

A curious numbness was already stealing up his leg. He bent awkwardly, shielding the match with his own body, a strange, grey tenseness in his face.

The solitary match spluttered into a sparkling pin-point of yellow flame. Cautiously he thrust it towards the little heap of dry twigs. And at that very moment the tiniest puff of wind came creeping across the frozen waterway and blew it out.

Standing there, with the spent match-end between his fingers, he heard the woman draw a sharp, agonised breath. Fordyce did not look towards her in that awful moment. He stared fixedly into space, seeing nothing, save the absolute certainty of their extinction.

In that instant, he was swept through by a fierce compassion, not for himself but for the woman beside him. The savage yelping of the dogs made a turmoil in his bewildered brain, pulsing with agony and horror. Feeling went from his leg. Limply he sank down in the snow, suppressing a groan. Once, almost appealingly, he glanced up into the woman's cold white face, reading nothing there save a quiet, calm fatalism, an unquestioning acceptance of the inevitable.

He smiled twistedly.

"You can't get over Fate," he said. "Funny, isn't it, how some people have all the luck?"

He had Hallan in mind when he said that, and again, after he had spoken, he saw that thin, tragic smile flit elusively across her face, leaving it strangely immobile. She did not look at him. Her eyes were fixed upon the hard skyline in a quiet, unwavering stare.

"You might push on alone," he suggested weakly. "There's just a chance——"

"The ghost of a one, I'm afraid," she remarked, shaking her head gravely.

He was stiffening. The cold sleep of those eternal solitudes was stealing through him, and he did not even attempt to fight against it. What was the use?

From that peculiar stupor he was roused presently by the woman's voice, calm and unhurried, without excitement.

"I think someone is coming," she said.

Groaning, he propped himself up in the snow, staring eagerly along the frozen river. For a while he could see nothing, save the endless expanses of white. Then, across his vision, a speck grew swiftly—grew to the thin shape of a hurrying dog-team, behind which a man ran lightly.

The man was Hallan.

What grim irony of Fate had sent him back along the river at that moment?

Fordyce heard the soft, slow impact of the runners as Hallan's sled bounded across the ridge and came slipping down towards them. Fordyce was unconscious of any emotion at all. The cold seemed to have frozen all feeling within him. He lay on his back, in absolute peace, and watched with faint curiosity. The woman was looking fixedly across the river. Hallan had halted the sled with a violent jerk and stood staring in speechless amazement. Fordyce saw him drop the long-handled whip. He came slowly towards them.

"What the blazes is the meaning of this?" he jerked out furiously.

Dimly, as if from a great distance, Fordyce heard the woman's voice.

"The cabin has been burnt. We were making for Lost Province. Only—we hadn't any matches."

Hallan stood back, staring down at Fordyce. There was fear in his eyes—fear and hate.

"No matches?" he repeated. "*No matches!*" He was shaken by a sudden fit of wild laughter. "Oh, Heavens, what a joke!"

"We must have fire," she reminded him evenly, "or he'll freeze—just freeze."

Again, at her words, Hallan was shaken by a gust of strange laughter.

"Freeze, will he? Well, why shouldn't he freeze?"

The woman made no movement. Her expression did not alter in the least. She looked calmly into her husband's face, twisted by an ugly, bitter smile. There was murder in that smile.

"Why shouldn't he freeze?" asked Hallan again.

Fordyce suppressed a groan of anguished fury. He tried to slide his hand towards his pocket, where he had put the heavy pistol, only to discover that the power of movement had already left his body.

Strangely, almost without comprehension, he heard the woman say again:

"We hadn't any matches."

Hallan seemed to be seized by some

terrible passion at that. He sprang forward, glaring down into Fordyce's greying features.

now you can lie and freeze! D'you hear? Lie—and freeze!"

Fordyce let out a cracked shout of rage. "You—you white-livered skunk!" he rasped. "You'd leave me here to die—like that!"

Hallan laughed—a low, savage, untamed laugh which split the silence into horrid, jagged echoes.



"She stooped, her eyes wide with a kind of terrible fascination. Fordyce felt her hand groping in his pocket. She straightened herself, the heavy pistol in her hand."

"Curse you!" he spat out, like some demented animal. "It was you that hounded me to this frozen hell! *You!*" His eyes were wild and bloodshot. "Well,

He flung himself back towards the waiting sled, pausing and spinning on his heel as he reached the bank.

"I suppose it was you that set fire to the

cabin!" he rasped, glaring at the woman. "You did it, eh? All right! Are you coming with me now—or staying there?"

There was a slow dawning horror in her

The woman stood like a frozen statue for an instant, then she stooped, her eyes wide with a kind of terrible fascination. Fordyce felt her hand groping in his pocket. She



Dudley Knapp

"'I suppose it was you that set fire to the cabin!' he rasped, glaring at the woman. 'You did it, eh? All right! Are you coming with me now—or staying there?'"

eyes. Her hand had flown to her throat, and her breath came in little, half-strangled gasps.

Fordyce heard the crack of the whip and the sound of Hallan's wild, savage laughter, as he set the sled in motion.

straightened herself, the heavy pistol in her hand, raising it with a calm, unhurried certainty.

She fired twice, and the silence seemed to be torn to shrieking shreds. Hallan's

leading husky dropped, snarling and snapping and twisting, in the snow, and the sled came to a sudden standstill, the loose snow flying in flurries all around. Hallan himself was flung off his feet, and went slipping and sliding down the steep banks. He picked himself up slowly, the snow-particles clinging to his furs.

The woman stood motionless, the smoking pistol in her hand.

"Don't you understand," she said wearily, "if we don't make a fire, he'll freeze to death. That would be murder, wouldn't it?"

"*Murder!*" said Hallan thickly.

The sudden shaking up he had received seemed to have taken the wildness out of him. His eyes appeared half dazed, half startled. Limply, with a foolish grin on his eyes, he stood looking at her.

"You had better collect some more wood, hadn't you?" she suggested. "Give me the matches."

He fumbled slowly in his furs, handing them to her in silence. Next instant the heap of twigs was crackling into yellow flame. Hallan, limping slowly back to the sled, cut loose the dead husky from the traceline, turning to pick a heavy axe from the bottom of the sled. He ran his finger along the edge of it, his eyes fixed on Fordyce and the woman.

"Hurry!" she urged him. "You'll find plenty of dry timber on the other side!"

"Oh, all right," said Hallan, in a dazed, sullen sort of voice.

Propped up in the heat of the fire, Fordyce felt the cold death being driven out of his body. Presently he was able to stand upon his feet, to walk upright.

He did not look at Hallan. Neither did

Hallan look at him. It was a queer situation.

Only, in her strange detachment, Hallan's wife seemed quite at her ease. Once, through the firelight, she turned to smile at Fordyce. Never, to his dying day, did Fordyce forget the beauty and the tragedy of that smile. It haunted him for ever.

"Well, we'd better be pushing on," suggested Hallan uneasily. "No use hanging about."

The woman rose in silence, gathering up her furs. Hallan turned slowly and walked to his sled.

Hesitatingly, his eyes fixed in the redness of the fire, Fordyce said:

"Reckon I'd better make for Honey Creek now. Where will you be heading? Back to Lost Province, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Hallan, picking up his whip.

Fordyce was looking at the woman now.

"I wonder," he said—"I wonder if either of us will ever know how much we owe her?"

Hallan flung him a quick look. He said nothing. Yet there was a queer expression in his eyes. It might have been the reluctant dawning of shame—of a new manhood.

Night came.

Fordyce, curled in his blanket, slept. Once, towards the dawn, he started up in wonderment. It was as if he had heard the sound of melody, trembling and sweet across the profound stillnesses, clear and pure, a harmony white-winged and of a golden texture.

Once, O wonder!

Once, from the ashes of my heart,
Arose a blossom—

Yet there was nothing. Only the unpeopled hush.

SONG.

IF Love were only a song for singing,

A red rose swinging,

An hour for joy;

Then Love would die with a girl and a boy.

But Love is ever the song's departure,

A fleeing rapture,

A thornèd pride;

And it lives when all in the world has died.

AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.



"' But—but you could have had that job in the North—you could perhaps have stayed at Merle . . . if I'd tried to persuade Uncle Dan instead of—of——' ' But you didn't want that.' ' I thought I didn't—until—this afternoon.' "

THE EIGHTH : GABLE : :

By PHILIPPA SOUTHCOMBE

◉ ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE ◉

MR. Mullett of Merle lifted a solemn countenance from his prolonged contemplation of the papers spread upon the library table, and, keeping a square forefinger on the Front Elevation of the Mansion of Merle, conceded graciously :

" It's all right, mind you, as far as it goes. But I'll have another gable. There's only seven here."

The young man he addressed glanced from the plans to Mr. Mullett and from Mr. Mullett to the plans. Then he said, in a quiet, firm voice that echoed the impression conveyed by a quiet, firm, brown face :

" I should not advise another gable. You see, this plan is modelled on the old house at Merle. It repeats the irregularity of the original. This south wing——"

" I know all that," interrupted Mr. Mullett impatiently. " What I mean to say is, I believe in going one better than them before you. You get me, young man ? "

The young man, otherwise Christopher Shannon, architect, " got " Mr. Mullett without effort ; indeed, it must be confessed that so far the latter had justified his maxim . . . as his own immediate ancestor had supplied an ever-ready public with wheelks

from a barrow, a calling which, admirable and necessary as it might be, would not normally have suggested the evolution of Mr. Mullett of Merle. . . . Yet even this example of Mr. Mullett's consistency did not enlighten Christopher until his patron condescended to explain further.

"The old owners"—thus did Mr. Mullett designate those four centuries' descendants of the Bohun Fitzclare who had built Merle in the reign of Elizabeth—"the old owners, p'raps, thought seven gables all right—or p'raps that was all they could afford. But that ain't my idea. As a Gentleman's Residence"—Mr. Mullett emphasised the capital letters by standing erect upon the hearthrug with his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets—"Merle is not goin' to be second to any in the county. So just throw in an extra gable, young man, and show me the plan again."

With which, quite naturally, Mr. Mullett considered the interview ended. He was not prepared for the quiet, firm voice of Christopher Shannon :

"I'm sorry I can't do that, Mr. Mullett."

"Eh?" Mr. Mullett stared. Then : "Oh, come!" he said encouragingly. "You're a young feller, I know—but you understand your job—or I wouldn't be employin' you. I keep me eyes open—and people what don't understand their jobs don't get employed by me. But you—well. I flatter meself you could fit in twenty gables if they was wanted."

"You're very kind——"

Mr. Mullett, detecting no untoward note in the grave, firm voice, waved a gracious hand. "Not at all—not at all! I mean what I say. You've the brains—I see that. But what you want is a bit more push, see? Too modest, you are."

Christopher Shannon appeared politely interested. . . . Mr. Mullett of Merle once more jabbed the Front Elevation with an authoritative forefinger.

"You can put it where you like—'slong as it shows from the happroach to the house, mind. I'm going to have the terraces extended an' planted with choice trees an' flowerin' shrubs—Kennedys have the order—sparin' no expense. P'raps if you put the gable at the end here it'd look well—sort of balance the other side, wouldn't it?"

"Perhaps it would do that. . . . But—I'm sorry, but I'm afraid you didn't understand me just now. I meant that I couldn't agree to add an eighth gable. Not because

it would be difficult—but because I don't consider it—suitable."

"Suitable? Suitable?" Mr. Mullett pronounced the first syllable as if he were thinking of work for the sweep, and his face deepened its hue by two shades. "What's that? For a gentleman's residence——"

"When I started work for you, I agreed to reconstruct Merle exactly on the lines of the old mansion, rebuilding the part that was burnt down in accordance with the old drawings of the place, simply adding modern conveniences. Wasn't that understood?"

"Ah! You mean an extry gable wasn't in the bargain, eh? Well, you needn't worry about that! What Daniel Mullett buys he pays for—and that applies to the extry time you'll need in fittin' in the gable. Well, that's all right! I like to find a young feller business-like—just add it on the bill an' go ahead."

"But I didn't mean that at all. I don't usually—er—reckon up in that way." Mr. Shannon smiled gently, controlling a sudden youthful desire to wrap Mr. Mullett's patronising grin in the green damask window curtains. Mr. Mullett was quite genuinely bewildered.

"Well, then, I don't know what's got you, that I don't!"

"Just—Merle, I think," said the surprising young man. "Merle—and its traditions. An eighth gable would be all wrong, Mr. Mullett."

"Oh!" Mr. Mullett's glance was slightly suspicious; the word "tradition" rather worried him. "Oh—that won't do for me, you know! If it ain't my 'ouse—mansion I should say—whose is it? You tell me that."

Christopher Shannon did not make the attempt. He stood in the Dower House library and looked across the park with its May bravery of young leafage—golden-brown of tardy oak, silken jade of beech and lime, and here and there a wild cherry in pearl and bronze, and a dark spruce tipped with silver—to the half-ruined mansion whose resurrection was in his hands. And with every second ticked out by the great clock that had told the time of day to generations of Merle dowagers, Christopher Shannon was more firmly resolved that Merle should rise in its own likeness, that not by an eighth gable should Mr. Mullett declare his maxim of "going one better than them before him."

Mr. Mullett's next words, intended for dignified reproach, failed in their effect.

"Me and Mrs. Mullett agreed that you were just the young fellow as we'd be glad to do a good turn to. We meant to let everyone know who'd had the job of rebuilding the place—a good advert. that, you take my word for it! Lots of people round about remember the old place, before it was burnt—and so they'd see the improvements, and you'd get the credit."

"Your suggestion, Mr. Mullett, would not be an improvement. The old house—that stood for nearly four centuries—didn't need improving. As you will see by the drawings, it was dignified—and complete."

Upon Mr. Mullett there slowly dawned the awful truth that this young man, a mere impecunious designer of houses, was defying his employer. . . . For a moment he gazed upon Christopher Shannon . . . then he said heavily, answering his own question of a few moments before :

"It's my house. I've bought it—the site an' the ruins—that is. And I'm givin' you the chance of a lifetime. I don't want to hear any highfalutin nonsense—" He broke off, following Christopher Shannon's glance towards a shadow that suddenly darkened the open door on to the garden. "I'm talkin' business, Barb'ra," he said impatiently.

The girl in the doorway calmly ignored the hint and stepped across the threshold, surveying her uncle and Christopher Shannon over the posy of cowslips she held up to her admirable little nose.

"Highfalutin business—" said Barbara Trent.

Her voice was sweet and rather amazingly deep—emanating as it did from a damsel who, in the words of Mr. Mullett, "looked like you could blow her away." But not, it would seem, with the wind of Mr. Mullett's displeasure. She came into the library and selected a blue and white bowl for her cowslips, moving aside the Front Elevation of Merle to make room for them on the table. Then she took up the drawing and studied it gravely.

"Have you shown it to Aunt Nelly?"

Mr. Mullett replied briefly in the negative.

"Why not?"

Mr. Mullett frowned. Barbara Trent was his wife's orphan niece and had made her home with the Mulletts (now) of Merle since she had left her convent school several years ago. During those years Mr. Mullett had frequently been known to observe, with a

touch of melancholy pride, that whatever else them nuns had taught her, Barb'ra hadn't wanted any learning to get right there every time—a dark saying which bore on a directness and determination unsuspected in one who looked as if you could blow her away.

So now, realising that evasion was futile, Mr. Mullett replied shortly that the plans weren't finished yet—there were alterations to be made—he'd just been telling Mr. Shannon about it, and, anyway, that bowl was valuable china, and hadn't she better find something else for the flowers?

"*Nothing's* too valuable for flowers, Uncle Dan—especially spring flowers." Barbara thrust the bowl under Mr. Mullett's nose. "Just smell them! They're worth all the china bowls in the world—and Aunt Nelly loves them. . . . But—why is that plan to be altered?"

Mr. Mullett bowed to the inevitable.

"I've told Shannon as I want another gable put in."

"Oh!"

Barbara looked from her uncle to Christopher Shannon—thoughtfully. Christopher Shannon made the discovery that her eyes were grey. She addressed him in her deep, sweet voice. "Where are you going to put it?"

"I have just told Mr. Mullett that I cannot agree to add an eighth gable—anywhere."

"Oh! . . . I see. Is that the highfalutin business?"

Mr. Mullett uttered a sound indicative of impatience. Christopher Shannon, surprising twin imps of mockery in the limpid depths of the grey eyes, felt suddenly at a loss.

"Now look here, Barb'ra—this ain't—isn't a joke. It's an important matter that's got to be settled. Shannon"—he glanced at Christopher—"I'm sure that Shannon quite understands that."

The designer of gables bowed.

"If you will reconsider your suggestions, Mr. Mullett, I shall be pleased to continue with the work."

Mr. Mullett drew a long breath; with an effort he mastered his emotions. . . . The young man, of course, must be crazy—throwing away the chance of a lifetime like this . . . forfeiting the patronage of Mr. Mullett of Merle for the sake of some absurd notion that hadn't a shred of common sense to back it. He glanced at the great clock.

"I'll give you twenty-four hours to come

to your sen—think it over, young man. I 'ope at the end of that time you'll come to me with the new plan—eight gables showin' in front."

Christopher Shannon had made up his mind—and he was a determined young man. But he had reckoned without the grey-eyed damsel who looked as if you could blow her away. Her voice, cool yet persuasive, broke in on that moment wherein he sought for a final and crushing reply to Mr. Mullett's suggestion.

"Come out of doors, Mr. Shannon—and tell me just why you don't want Merle to have eight gables!"

Perhaps there was magic in such an invitation on such a morning. . . . it cannot have been that Christopher wanted to say all over again that which he had said during the last half-hour . . . or perhaps mere courtesy made a refusal difficult—even cowardly.

Mr. Mullett protested sharply.

"My dear Barb'ra——" and then, as sharply, broke off. For all his self-esteem he had not under-estimated the firmness—he called it pig-headedness—of this annoying young man. An uneasy suspicion had begun to assail him that Christopher Shannon might really uphold his ridiculous objection: in that case it might be as well to let Barbara try her hand. . . . Barbara knew a thing or two when it came to getting what she wanted, convent or no convent, and she'd manage it in such a way that folks didn't realise they were giving in until it was all over. . . . Of course he could fire the young man and get someone else, but that would mean delay as well as a certain admission of failure, and besides, as he had graciously stated, Christopher Shannon thoroughly understood his job.

So with a gesture intended to convey the fact that he had said the last word on the subject, he left it to Barbara.

Out in the May morning sunlight something of his desire to wrap Mr. Mullett's face in the window curtains left Christopher Shannon. Barbara led the way to the low stone wall at right angles to the terrace, and, poising herself upon it, calmly waited for his explanation.

He gave it, as briefly as possible, merely stating that he had undertaken to reconstruct Merle as it had stood for four centuries, and that he could not agree to Mr. Mullett's wish for any alteration.

Barbara looked at him gravely.

"You think it should be as it



"The girl in the doorway calmly ignored the hint and stepped across the threshold, surveying her uncle and Christopher Shannon over the posy of cowslips she held up to her admirable little nose."

has been for so long. . . . I sec. . . ."

Christopher Shannon wished devoutly that Mr. Mullett had shared this exquisite clarity of vision. . . . There was a moment's beautiful silence, while the swallows, whose ancestors had returned to Merle for close on four hundred springs, skimmed and dipped in the sunlight on wings blue-black as Barbara's hair. Then:

"I agree with you," she said gently.

Christopher Shannon fell in love with her. This is not so unduly precipitate as it appears. Half an hour of a May morning in the company of a slim sweet damsel who agrees with one in such a voice as Barbara's might be allowed to accomplish much. In Christopher Shannon's case the magic went deeper still, somehow involving all the beauty and tradition of Merle, strengthening his determination to oppose Mr. Mullett, while forgiving Mr. Mullett a good deal because he had contrived to possess such a niece by marriage as Barbara Trent. . . .

She went on, pensively, watching the swallows:

"Uncle Dan's awfully obstinate. . . . But he doesn't understand—about Merle—

He had, indeed, been positive before, but this adorable sympathy from Barbara was the final consecrating touch to his resolve. He looked across at Merle, but saw instead the little serious face of Barbara. . . . She leaned forward, clasping slim hands around her knees as she balanced on the wall.

"Promise that you won't give in!" she said earnestly.

Christopher Shannon promised.

* * *

Twenty-four hours later Barbara again invaded the Dower House library



" 'I'm talkin' business, Barb'ra,' he said impatiently."

or—or you. He's quite sure that you'll give in in the end and fix up that eighth gable. . . ." She glanced at the firm brown profile surreptitiously from beneath her lashes, saw that its expression was even firmer than usual, and added quickly: "Oh, I do hope you won't!"

Christopher Shannon was quite positive that he wouldn't.

where Mr. Mullett of Merle raged in solitude. He pointed a shaking finger at a figure retreating across the park. Christopher Shannon walked stiffly and haltingly, because of a part well-played at Beaumont Hamel, but his air nevertheless contrived to convey the impression of a man who has triumphed.

"That young fool," said Mr. Mullett, "has actually stuck to his crazy notion.

He's refused to listen to reason. He won't add another gable. . . . A nice state of affairs when a gentleman can't have his house as he wants it!"

"Oh!" Barbara turned swiftly from the window, with something akin to dismay in her grey eyes. "Oh! D'you mean you're going to let him do as he wants—and—and leave the gable out?"

Mr. Mullett snorted.

"Eh? Me give in? What do you think? 'Course not. He's fired, he is. Pity, too; he's always seemed a nice young feller, an' jobs like this ain't too easy to come by. Badly wounded in the old war, too. But still . . . that's not here nor there. If he won't do as I want . . . Trouble is, now I've got to find someone else."

"Have you . . . have you thought of anyone?"

Mr. Mullett stated somewhat tartly that he hadn't. The whole thing was a nuisance—inasmuch as it postponed the rise of Merle (with its eight proud gables).

There was a little pause. Then Barbara said pensively:

"I suppose you couldn't get Harley Paget?"

"Eh? Who's he?" Mr. Mullett's tone was still ruffled, but his alert glance denoted that he was—as ever—prepared to listen to common sense.

"Harley Paget is a nephew of Sir Hubert Danvers, the well-known architect. He was with his uncle for several years, and now the old man is thinking of retiring. I should think you'd find him—Harley Paget, I mean—entirely competent and—and sensible."

"Ah!" said Mr. Mullett weightily. "I could do with some sense! That young Shannon—pity he didn't realise what an opportunity he was chucking away—"

"Yes. Very likely he never thought of your getting anyone else so soon. I—happen to know Mr. Paget could come down at once. He's staying near Marlborough—with the Brandons. You could send a telegram, couldn't you?"

Mr. Mullett felt that, after all, the nuns had taught Barbara some sense. . . . He was even more ready to admit the fact when Harley Paget arrived at Merle and accepted the commission. He was a rather splendid young man with a monocle—and he was perfectly agreeable to Merle's "going one better" in the matter of gables.

He was putting up at the Fitzclare Arms in the village, and on his return thither

from his consultation with Mr. Mullett, he encountered Barbara, a slim, sweet Barbara in a knitted silk frock of May leaf green.

"This," said Mr. Paget, "is an excellent stunt. . . . Just when I was feelin' more than usually fed up. Did you wangle it, Barbara?"

From which it will appear that Sir Hubert Danvers's nephew and the orphan niece of Mr. Mullett of Merle had met before.

"I spoke of you to Uncle Dan," said Barbara primly. She couldn't have told why his allusion to her diplomacy vaguely jarred, or why she had a sudden vivid memory of Christopher Shannon's retreating figure walking stiffly across the park. . . . Harley Paget laughed. To do him justice, he dismissed the affair of his predecessor's departure as no concern of his. What *was* his concern was the fact that Barbara, slim and sweet (and the niece of Mr. Mullett, whose material fulfilment of his maxim of "going one better" was well worth consideration), had "wangled" his coming to Merle. It was less than a month since he had met her at the Brandons' house party: Delia Brandon, who had been Barbara's schoolmate at the convent, had enlightened him briefly. . . . Barbara herself had accomplished the rest. Having no scruples as to the number of gables permitted to the Front Elevation of Merle, the job—a pleasant, inevitably protracted job in delightful surroundings—was a foregone conclusion; he proposed to see as little as possible of his employer, and as much as possible of his employer's niece, whose sedate admission he construed entirely to his satisfaction.

As for Barbara, she returned to the Dower House in the gayest of spirits.

* * * * *

She had concluded, quite naturally, that when Christopher Shannon had walked away across the park, he had walked definitely away from Merle and all therein. Thus it was with something of a shock that, riding alone one thundery afternoon, she came face to face with him some four miles from Merle. She reined in as sharply as if someone had seized her bridle hand, and the little mare plunged resentfully. Christopher Shannon lifted his cap.

"What are you doing here?" Her voice was strangely unlike that with which, in the Dower House garden, she had proffered sympathy and asked his promise not to give in; it sounded almost as if she, for some reason, shared the mare's resentment of

circumstances. Christopher Shannon answered gravely :

"I am executing a commission."

"Oh! I'm glad——" She stared at him with odd intentness. "You—you're not at the Fitzclare Arms?"

"No. I left there—ten days ago. I'm at a farm over there." He indicated the hills beyond, above whose green folds a great cloud lowered white on lavender and thundery pink.

"We're in for a storm! You'd better get home before it breaks!"

She wanted to say: "I'm so sorry—about your leaving Merle." But the words were too absurd a mockery. So she rode home—slowly—and yet reached Merle an hour before the storm, which had not been really imminent.

She found that Harley Paget had walked up to the Dower House to consult Mr. Mullett upon some matter connected with Merle. But Mr. Mullett, with his wife, had motored in to the county town.

Barbara, presiding over tea in the library, was aware of Mr. Paget's amiable voice alluding to "the fellow your uncle didn't find satisfactory"—and flushed angrily at a tone that, intentionally or not, made Christopher Shannon sound like a defaulting footman.

"Queer fish, I should think," said Mr. Paget. "It seems he turned down a big and lucrative job up in the North, and now he's over at Bellstock designin'—what do you think? *Pigsties*."

"Pigsties?"

"Pigsties. I suppose," said Mr. Paget carelessly, "it was the only job he could get. . . . Anyway—he doesn't matter. What matters is that I am going to kiss you. . . ."

But that only mattered because it didn't happen. For Barbara, crying tragically, "*Pigsties*!" eluded the grasp of Mr. Paget's over-confident arm, and left him staring blankly at a closing door.

Out in the stable-yard the rain was splashing down to the accompaniment of low growls of thunder and flickers of lightning as the spent storm rolled away westwards. An astonished groom was ordered to saddle up Biddy again—quickly.

"It won't hurt her—she didn't go far this afternoon and she's as fresh as paint." Barbara swung into the saddle before the man had finished adjusting the curb chain, and a moment later was cantering across the wet turf of the park.

She rode up towards the range of rolling hills with their clumps of beech trees vivid jade in the stormy light, not stopping to reflect that "a farm up there" had not been a very lucid direction. . . . But fortune favoured her, for she overtook an oil-skinned figure who, head down and empty pipe in mouth, was tramping, stiffly, through the rain.

"Mr. Shannon, stop! Is it true about the pigsties?"

Mr. Shannon stopped, rather as though he had been shot.

"You—you'll get awfully wet," he said stupidly.

Barbara slipped from Biddy's back.

"Why—*why* did you refuse that job in the North? Was it because you thought—because I made you think—that Uncle Dan would agree about the gables, and you'd stay at Merle?"

Christopher Shannon made no reply. He stood rigidly erect and stared at the little drowned figure who looked slimmer than ever in riding kit.

"I—I've got to tell you! I made you promise not to give in because I wanted you to go—so that Harley Paget could come instead."

"I see. But why ride all this way in the rain to tell me that?"

His voice was so quiet that for a moment she didn't realise its bitterness.

"The—the pigsties——"

"They're model pigsties," he assured her, still in that gentle voice. "The first of their kind in the neighbourhood!"

"But—but you could have had that job in the North—you could perhaps have stayed at Merle . . . if I'd tried to persuade Uncle Dan instead of—of——"

"But you didn't want that."

"I thought I didn't—until—this afternoon. I—oh, Christopher, darling!"

It was the sound of a Klaxon horn three times reiterated that announced the imminence of the beautiful dark blue Rolls bearing Mr. Mullett of Merle homewards.

Mr. Mullett gazed and gazed.

"You've always liked Christopher, Uncle Dan. . . . I'm going to marry him," said Barbara.

* * * * *

Two days later Mr. Paget returned to town. He gave it as his opinion that old Mullett was the ultimate limit. Mr. Mullett had disapproved his plans for the re-erection of Merle, had told him that, having thought

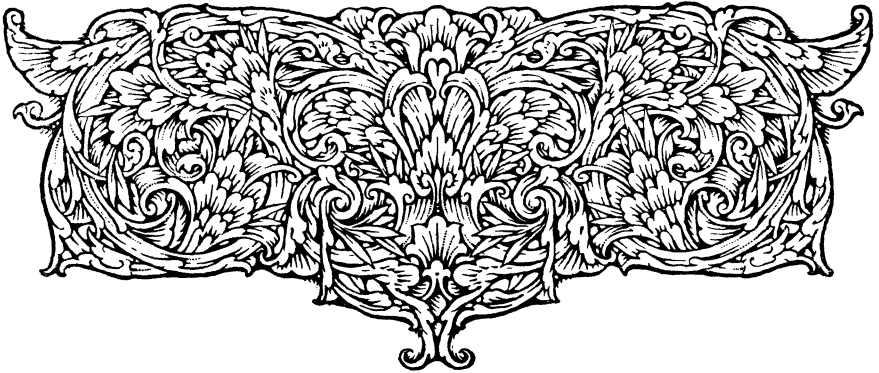
things over, he preferred those already submitted by Mr. Shannon.

"The fact is," confided Mr. Mullett across the library table on the evening following Mr. Paget's departure, "it don't do to go against superstition. Now, I'm not superstitious meself—but I was down in the village an' that old feller from the forge—blacksmith's gran'father, ain't he?—got talkin'. Said as how *his* father'd told him seven was always the lucky number up to Merle. That was why they'd built it with seven gables—an' seven steps down from the terrace—an' there used to be a figger seven cut in the old panellin' somewhere. In fact, after a time, seven came to be a sort of—sort of mascot to the place. And then—years ago—in this chap's father's time it was, one of the old owners thought he'd have things in eights. So he started in to build on a bit—add an extra gable. And then—things began to happen. His eldest son was killed in a duel—and the rest

of them died sudden, one way or another, and the money went—and then the place took fire, and he was burnt along with it. Queer, you must say. Of course, I don't believe it, reely, meself. But the old chap did, and Mrs. Mullett didn't fancy the notion, either. So—well. I suppose we'll have to be content with them plans, eh?"

He nodded towards the papers Christopher Shannon had spread before him. And so he missed the look which the young man directed towards Barbara. Into Barbara's face, as her eyes met Christopher Shannon's, came a delicate deepening pink. . . . But it was not until they were alone that, yielding to his stern insistence, she confessed.

"He's always been a friend of mine—old Ben Hockey at the Forge. . . . And he loved to talk of Merle. . . . After a time, I think he really believed his father *had* told him. . . . And anyway, darling, he's as pleased as Punch to have the money to buy that donkey and cart. . . ."



MORNING AT KENSINGTON.

TRANQUIL as far-off corn

These urban shades, where soon

Follows on serene morn

Unruffled afternoon.

The High Street roar is lessened to a spent bee's tune.

Here age, like childhood, throws

Its cap in air, here cries—

"How magically glows

In our, as in their eyes,

Yon antique dreamy Palace of youth's paradise!"

ERIC CHILMAN.

"I have lost my *portemonnaie*," said the little old lady. "I fear I cannot pay you." She spoke in even tones, seeming less perturbed than you would have expected. "*Mais, Madame!*" cried Pioupiou in consternation."



⊙ ⊙ PIOUSPIOU ⊙ ⊙

By OLIVER MADOX HUEFFER

⊙ ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK GILLETT ⊙

"I HAVE lost my *portemonnaie*," said the little old lady. "I fear I cannot pay you." She spoke in even tones, seeming less perturbed than you would have expected.

"*Mais, Madame!*" cried Pioupiou in consternation.

"I fear I must also ask you to advance me a few francs with which to return home. I live at the other end of the rue de Vaugirard and I am unable to walk so far."

"*Mais, Madame!!!*" cried Pioupiou again.

It was indeed a serious thing for Pioupiou, for it is the rule of the Restaurant Tabatier that the waiters pay for all orders at the time of transmitting them, afterwards recovering the total from the client. Again, in the Restaurant Tabatier, which provides

an excellent *prix-fixe* meal for Frs. 6.50—in Pioupiou's time it was only Frs. 4.75, but prices have risen since then—the waiter receives no wage, but supports himself on his *pourboires*. These are almost as invariable as the price of the *déjeuner*, being five sous if you dine without extras and seven if, unsatisfied with the *carafon* of red wine or bottle of beer or cider included in the fixed price, you adventure into the wine-list or pay a supplement for some dish not included in the regular menu. So Pioupiou, in this alarming crisis, was faced not only with the loss of 4.75 francs already paid to Madame Tabatier at the cash-desk, but with that of as much as he might lend to the doubtful customer as well. And when you are saving every sou for a very particular purpose, 4.75 francs is a serious matter, let alone the rest.

A quick decision was needed, and Pioupiou was not quick in coming to decisions, perhaps because his early days had been spent on a sheep-farm, where you have plenty of time for taking thought in an emergency. He looked down upon the little old lady with a harassed eye. Her appearance was not too promising. She was neatly dressed enough, in old-fashioned black silk, with an appropriate bonnet, but her clothes were worn, even to the shoes, the last refuge of prosperity in a French-woman. Her face was old and lined, but she had a bright black eye—it reminded Pioupiou of one of the sparrows in the little public garden opposite the restaurant—and her upward glance was humorous, even sarcastic, rather than down-cast or fearful.

It was in her favour that she had made no effort to escape without paying. The Restaurant Tabatier stands at the corner of the Place Ste Marthe—in the very shadow of the tall twin steeples—and the rue Hortense, not a hundred yards from the great gates of the Ministry of Defence, excellently situated, that is to say, for attracting the custom of the not-too-well-paid civil servant. The pavement being narrow, it has only a small *terrasse*, with just room for one row of tables behind the hedge of privet planted in green boxes. There are eight tables—four on either side of the angle. They are of iron, painted light green to augment the rusticity of the privet-hedge, and the little old lady occupied the last table in the rue Hortense. At that time M. Tabatier was finding it necessary to cut down expenses—it was but three months later that he was forced to raise his *prix-fixe* to Frs. 5.50 and to reduce the free allowance of wine to a *demi-carafon*. Pierre (*dit* Pioupiou) was the one outside waiter, and as even a French waiter cannot see round a corner, at busy hours, when all the tables were tenanted, he could not keep an eye on more than four of them at once. With the regular customers this did not matter—most of them were *abonnés*, buying in advance little books of ten tickets at a time and thereby securing an important economy of three sous on the price of each meal. But the little old lady was a chance comer and might easily have slipped away under cover of the privet-hedge without anyone being the wiser. That she had not done so was at least a presumption of honesty.

For a long moment Pioupiou considered chances, twisting his official napkin in agitated fingers and ignoring the appeals of

other guests. Suddenly it came into his mind, "But *tiens*—she is perhaps the Fée Maboul!" (You shall learn later more about the Fée Maboul.) "How much will Madame require?" he asked ruefully, producing a worn purse bulging with dirty paper money.

"Five francs will be sufficient," said the old lady with finality. "And now, young man, what is your name—that I may return it to you?"

"I am Pierre Sigognac. If Madame will be so good as to address to the care of M. Tabatier. Here is a card of the *maison* if Madame will accept it."

"Sigognac. That is a good name," said the old lady reflectively. "You are, of course, from the South?"

"From the Deux-Bièvres, Madame. From the neighbourhood of Biort. Pardon, Madame, if Madame will excuse me——"

He motioned expressively towards where other impatient clients were calling to him.

"A moment. I require an autotaxi. Do I not see one at the corner there, beside the church?"

There was something like a mutiny among the civil-servants, and Pioupiou earned for himself a sharp reproof from Madame Tabatier ere he had finished ushering the old lady into her cab, giving the chauffeur some address at the Luxembourg end of the rue de Vaugirard—the longest street in Paris—and returning to soothe the feelings of the furious *abonnés*. But worse even than the *patronne's* railing was it that neither that day nor the next nor any day at all did the little old lady return to pay her debt. "You are a fool to expect it," said, in various ways, Monsieur and Madame Tabatier and Lucie their daughter, and Jean and Marcel, Pioupiou's two colleagues, and Mimi the waitress and Marie the dish-washer. "To think that you have been here in Paris for four years and can still be cheated so easily. You deserve all that has happened to you and more."

"But—the address," Pioupiou would stammer. "She gave me her address."

"Bah! What is an address? No doubt she gave another as soon as the autotaxi was out of sight. Go there and you will find that she is not known. Besides—you do not even know her name. No doubt she was an old hand at the game—a professional."

"But—she was an old lady," Pioupiou would protest. "Too old to——"

"It is you who are the loser, after all," Madame Tabatier would reply, closing the

argument with a shrug of her broad shoulders as she bent to her accounts again.

Yet, in spite of everything, Pioupiou still believed that some day she would return, and every morning when he set out the skimpy tablecloths on the iron tables he would say to himself wistfully, "Perhaps she will come to-day." For the ways of Fairies, Good and Bad, are inexplicable to mere mortals.

So for six months he waited, until everyone else had forgotten all about her, and still she never came, and perhaps in the end Pioupiou would have lost his belief in old ladies, and with it his faith in Good Fairies, had not something happened even more disconcerting. He lost his situation. The vagaries of the franc-exchange, that is to say, became so incomprehensible, and the consequent range of food-stuff prices so incapable of sequence, that M. Tabatier found himself faced with the choice of two evils—either to raise his *prix-fixe* still further, to Frs. 6.50, which would certainly entail the loss of half his thrifty clientèle—as did actually happen some months later when the fatal step became inevitable—or to reduce his staff. He chose the lesser, and because Pioupiou was the last-comer of the three *garçons*—perhaps also because he had shown himself so lacking in mother-wit in the matter of the little old lady—it was but right that he should be the first to go. If you wonder how, considering that he paid him no wages, the *patron* expected to save money by his dismissal, you are to remember that waiters get their meals free, and, for that matter, that the *patron*, by himself attending to the tables on the *terrasse*, might harvest the *pourboires* thitherto bestowed upon Lis servant.

In the matter of fairies, now. Had you ever seen Pioupiou totting up an *addition* and occasionally adding a superfluous *supplément* to the totals of stray provincials or obvious foreigners, you would never have believed that he was a firm believer in good and bad Fairies and Werwolves and all kinds of mythical creatures that wiser folk know are born of the imagination. It is true that Pioupiou would have told you that he had seen—and spoken to—a Fairy, and a Werwolf, too, for that matter, but you would not have believed it, however earnestly he spoke. Nevertheless, you can read all about Pioupiou's Fairy, whose name was the Fée Maboul, in Demaistre's *Myths and Mystics of the Central Massif* (Cran, Mesurier and Co., Paris, 1921, 17.50 frs.), where you will learn that the Fée Maboul (or Marboul or Marballe,

for the spelling is uncertain) is a very real person to the inhabitants of certain districts of the Département of the Deux-Bièvres, or, as it was known in the old days, the Sovereign Duchy of Santogne. Not only is she powerful for good in those parts, but she is perhaps unique in that she also keeps a fostering eye upon the fortunes of such unlucky Santongaux as are doomed to travel in far countries. So you may understand, even if you condemn, the subconscious hope of Pioupiou, that in allowing the little old lady in worn black silk to become indebted in the monstrous sum of ten francs he might be doing a favour to the Fée Maboul herself, and that in course of time she might suddenly appear to him, radiant in pink tulle ballet-skirts and wings and a wand, and return his money multiplied a hundredfold.

As you already know, this did not happen. Instead Pioupiou found himself derelict upon the *pavé* with six hundred francs of economies in his pocket and unemployment every day increasing with the rise of the franc and the consequent exodus of thrifty foreign visitors. Of course, six hundred francs is a great deal of money, but if you are saving up desperately, almost to the point of denying yourself the bare necessities—and if all your purpose in life and chances of happiness are bound up in one ambition, and that ambition is known as Lise and has the bluest of eyes—and, by the way, it is quite time we came to her.

You have probably traversed the Deux-Bièvres twenty times at least on your way to and from the Riviera and have listened drowsily as often to the familiar cry of the porters, "Bi-o-o-o-rr-r.—Cinq minutes d'arrêt!" without attaching any greater interest to it than to a dozen other provincial stopping-places. But the Deux-Bièvres, or, as its children still persist in calling it, the Santogne, has a very real interest to those who venture ten kilomètres or so away from the railway. The old Ducal capital, it is true, has become the centre of a district of iron and steel works, as busy in its lesser degree as Sheffield or Pittsburg; but the northern boundaries of the old Duchy include long stretches of the central backbone of France, and tucked away in the high mountain valleys and windswept plateaux there are all manner of lonely farms and shepherd cots and a whole people who—in a word, believe in Fairies.

Pioupiou was born in his grandfather's farm of the Four Winds—a name which speaks for itself. The Quatre-Vents is five

long leagues from Disdon-le-Potier, the nearest hamlet, which is itself thirty kilomètres from Biort, and the only approach to it is by a long ascending path up the valley of the Old Juniper, so that if you come in a wheeled vehicle—though you seldom do—you leave it at the entrance of the valley, near the Roman bridge over the Flèche brook, and walk the rest of the way, following the sheep-tracks. Grandpère Sigognac held the Farm of the Four Winds *en métairie*, which is to say that he took one half of the produce for himself and paid the rest to his landlord, a lawyer in Biort, who was agent for the ancient family of Dexfontaine. Grandpère Sigognac was incredibly old, and so was his good-wife, and they once boasted of three sons and three daughters, but two of the daughters married and two of the sons died for France, and one of them was Pioupiou's father, who at the age of fifty-three marched away to the frontier and died gloriously somewhere near St. Quentin. So they were left alone with their surviving son Jean Marie and their daughter Adèle and little Pioupiou.

Pioupiou was so called because his father, shortly before he was killed—his mother died at his birth—came home *en permission* and brought with him a steel helmet which little Pierre annexed for his own—though it was nearly large enough to serve him for a bath—and refused to part from at his father's departure. He was put to work at an incredibly early age, as is the local custom, the schoolmaster not being abroad in those parts of the Santogne. His task, if not very arduous, was not the less responsible. Every morning he led—for in the Santogne you do not drive—the eighty or so sheep that were his grandfather's flock from the fold where they were herded at night for fear of wolves or bears, out to the pasture that was called Bregheul—I have no idea what the word means and there is no mention of it, strangely enough, in Demaistre—and every evening at nightfall he led them back again, and between whiles he watched them while they browsed, and prayed devoutly that no wild beast would attack them—to say nothing of their small guardian.

The Bregheul is a wide grassy hill-side, dotted with juniper-bushes and brambles. Scattered everywhere about it are great rocks, and at one point especially are four together, three supporting the fourth, which learned men declare are the remains of a great temple built by some ancient people

long anterior to the dolmen-builders of Brittany.

The lower slopes of the Bregheul are lost in a deep ravine which runs down to the valley of the Flèche, while above it towers a great forest, covering all the mountain-crest, which might give lairage to half the wild beasts in Christendom for all Pioupiou could know to the contrary. That it was once a great resort of wolves is shown by the fact that the Ducs de Dexfontaine were for centuries Grand Louvetiers—or Head Wolf-slayers—of France, and that the present Dowager Duchess, by some Republican rearrangement, now holds that office and with it the right to a pack of wolfhounds for the better protecting of the local sheepfolds.

Very much more alarming even than the forest to little Pioupiou was the dark sunken lane that led to the farm from the Bregheul, which was at least open and sunlit. For the lane was overgrown with hollies and ilexes and other evergreens, so that it was shadowy even at the brightest noontide; and at one corner, where it turned almost at a right-angle without apparent reason, was a dark pool, that never returned a glimmer of the sunshine trickling down to it through the leaves. It was well known to the hinds, and through their evidence to Pioupiou as the home of a terrible water-monster, called Effanque, and to pass the pool of the Effanque twice a day, the second time when the evening shadows were falling, required no little heroism from Pioupiou, even though he did efface himself among the comfortable fleeces of the ewes in passing it.

Pioupiou was nearly nine when he had speech with the Fée Maboul, and, which was really more important, when he first became affianced to Lise. It was a formal engagement, for, by her instructions, he placed upon her finger a ring made of a fern-leaf, and she, in return, touched his forehead with the little red blossom of the Lamb's heart, and, as any Santongau of the Mountain could tell you, that is the most mystically binding of all forms of betrothal. Lise, although, curiously enough, she was a foreigner, coming from the Taire-et-Bréhon, which is on the other side of the Taire and at least fifty kilomètres from Biort, knew all that was to be known about Fairies and Spooks and other-worldliness in general, and especially all that has to do with forest-lore. She appeared suddenly one day from behind the Bregheul stones, alarming Pioupiou, who was stretched on his stomach superintending a race between two little

burnished beetles. She was small for her age, which was the same as Pioupiou's, and erect as a dart, and she had tawny hair and very direct blue eyes, and she told Pioupiou at once that she liked him very much and would marry him when they were old enough. She was, it seemed, the daughter of a wood-cutter, employed in the State forest which edged the Bregheul, and she lived, temporarily, in a perfectly fascinating encampment, in the very heart of the forest, made up of wooden huts covered with tarred felt. Her name was Lise Bûcheron, which suggested that her forbears had been woodcutters also, and she led a life that seemed almost ideal to Pioupiou, passing from forest to forest, as her father's work determined, staying seldom longer than three months at any one place, caring nothing for schools or school-masters, but picking up a wealth of folk-lore and forest-lore from the other men and women and children with whom her nomadic life brought her into contact.

After their first meeting she came down every day from the forest to renew their tryst, and they had known each other just about a month when they became formally engaged, and the very next day they met and talked with the *Fée Maboul*.

It was in the late autumn and a brisk, bright day, with a brisker wind from the east that brought the leaves circling down in floods from the forest trees. They were sharing their modest meal together in the shelter of the dolmen when Lise lifted her head and held up her hand for silence. "The fairy horns in the forest," she said. "The *Fée Maboul* is going hunting to-day."

Pioupiou listened. The sound came very clear and distinct upon the wind from somewhere very far away—the sound of hunting-horns blowing in harmony.

"Perhaps we shall see her," said Lise hopefully. "You can recognise her at once. She rides upon a white horse and she has a crown. You can tell her because she is so very beautiful. And those who see her and speak to her will always be happy and fortunate all their lives."

"Is that her?" asked Pioupiou, pointing up the hill-side.

Out of one of the artificial glades that dissect the forest came a rider on a white horse, and ambled slowly over the grass towards them, Pioupiou's sheep rising lazily to give them passage. The white horse was limping, and hung his head as though he were very tired, and the rider was patting his head and speaking to him encouragingly. When she

came near enough Pioupiou could see that she was a woman, dressed in clothes such as he had never seen before. Her coat and habit were of green, embroidered with gold at the neck, and she wore a three-cornered hat, also embroidered with gold and with little white feathers edging it. Round her shoulders was a great hunting-horn, and she wore gauntleted gloves that reached almost to her elbows, and carried in her hand a riding-switch with a golden tassel. Pioupiou did not think that she was very beautiful—though beauty is a matter of opinion—for her hair was grey and her face almost brick-red and seeming square above her white hunting-stock. She was decidedly plump, too, and the varnished boots that showed beneath her habit were square and substantial. But she had a very kind face and smiled down upon the children as she drew up beside them.

"Good morning, little ones," she said in a voice that was full of friendliness. "Perhaps you can tell me. Have you seen the hounds?"

They looked at her in dumb awe. We may discuss what we shall say when we are privileged to meet a Fairy, but when we really do meet her, it is another matter.

The Fairy smiled encouragingly, and Lise found words to answer her. "We heard the horns in the forest," she said, "a great way over there." And she pointed towards the east.

"Then I was right," said the Fairy, a shade peevishly. "Well, that is too far for poor Phillidor. Then, can you tell me the way to the bridge over the *Flèche*?"

"Are you the *Fée Maboul*?" asked Lise suddenly.

"Am I—what did you say? The *Fée*—why—what do you know about the *Fée Maboul*?" She did not seem at all offended, however.

"We thought——" began Pioupiou timidly, but grew dumb as her keen grey eyes fell upon him.

"We are Pierre Sigognac and Lise Bûcheron, his affianced," said Lise very distinctly, venturing to extend a timid hand to stroke Phillidor's nose. "And we hoped that—we hoped that you——"

"That the *Fée Maboul* would give you her blessing so that you could be happy ever after—is that it? Well—if you are good children and grow up to be good man and good woman—why not?" And the Fairy chuckled to herself as though she had said something amusing. Then another thought

seemed to strike her. "But even so—I cannot promise that you will not have your share of sorrows. Nobody can hope to escape his burden of them." She looked grave again for a moment. "But one thing I can promise you. Only be good yourselves and help others and try to make the world a little better for us all and I can promise—faith of a Fairy—that you will come to very great happiness at last."

It seemed to Pierre that her voice had grown sad, but he may have been mistaken, for she added, smiling again: "The way to the Roman bridge? Over there? Thank you, my little ones, and good day to you."

had disappeared behind a fold in the hillside. Lise turned to Pioupiou. "You see," said Lise triumphantly. "She has blessed our union."

Because even then Pioupiou was very shy and sensitive and given to concealing his thoughts lest he be laughed at at home, he said nothing that evening about his meeting with the Fairy Maboul, and if his elders happened to mention at supper that the old Duchess had been hunting again in the forest that afternoon, it meant nothing to him, even if he heard them.

It seemed, unfortunately, that the first part of the Fairy's prophecy was to come true only too soon, for before Pioupiou was twelve his Aunt Adèle died of a fever, and a year later his Uncle Jean Marie was crushed under an overturned waggon and became a hopeless cripple. It was impossible for the old couple to manage the farm by themselves, and they must resign themselves to life in a semi-charitable institution in Biort, devoting their savings to the care of their helpless son, while Pioupiou was left to fend for himself. His first employment was as pantry-boy in a local hotel; before he was twenty-two he had



"Are you the Fée Maboul?" asked Lise suddenly."

Her hand went to her pocket, but she withdrew it suddenly and only waved it kindly to the children as she urged Phillidor downwards across the elastic turf.

They gazed after her until horse and rider

gained and lost his post in the Restaurant Tabatier and was tramping the streets of Paris in search of another.

Of all the evil fortune that followed upon the Fée Maboul's prophecy, the worst was

his severance, as it seemed for good and all, from his affianced. Lise's father came to the Forest of the Four Columns, above the Bregheul, every alternate year, and remained there for some three months. Pioupiou's last meeting with Lise—save for one hurried visit—was in the autumn of the year in which he left the Farm of the Four Winds. They

and although he sent his new address to Lise she never answered him. It sometimes seemed to him that the Fée Maboul could not be a good fairy at all ; unless, indeed, he had himself done something to prejudice her against him.

It was a long month before he found another post, by which time his six hundred francs were reduced to four hundred, and then only as counter-man in a rather shady café at the lower end of the Avenue d'Orléans, by the fortifications. Within three months, during which he heard

no word of Lise, he lost it, not from any fault of his own, but because the *patron*, who drank more



“ ‘Am I—what did you say ? The Fée—why—what do you know about the Fée Maboul ? ’ ”

wrote to each other regularly thereafter, but after his dismissal from the Restaurant Tabatier Lise's letters stopped suddenly, almost as though because of it. He called at the restaurant almost daily to inquire, until at last the *patronne*, who had taken a dislike to him, told him not to come again,

of his stock than he sold, got into trouble with the police and the place was closed. Followed another interval of worklessness, during which the four hundred francs dwindled to one hundred. Then one day, at one of the agencies where his name was entered, he was told of a possible opening in

the Boulevard Montparnasse, behind the Luxembourg. He was on his way thither when, crossing the Place of the Lion of Belfort, he suddenly realised that it was Fair-week in the Avenue, and that the whole of the Place was taken up by shooting-galleries and *carrousels* and lotteries and theatre-booths and Montagnes Russes, so that it was almost impossible to make a way through the admiring crowds.

Among the most imposing of the canvas booths was one devoted to Le Boxe. Before it was a raised gallery, whereon beefy champions of the art of self-defence displayed their swollen muscles, while a clown exercised his wit, a drummer beat terrific fantasies upon his instrument and a gentleman in evening-dress rang a handbell at intervals and challenged the world to produce a champion worthy of withstanding any one of his troupe, offering a thousand francs—"But, yes, Messieurs et Dames, the colossal sum, the enormous fortune, of *One Thousand Francs*"—to any successful aspirant.

Pioupiau, immobilised in the crowd, was idly considering whether to offer his frail body as a sacrifice to the Goddess of Fortune, when he was aware of two strong young arms flung round his neck and of a well-remembered voice in his ear: "My little Pioupiau—my cherished one—that I should have found you again after all these months."

"But—my most precious—" cried Pioupiau when they had testified their mutual delight with that open-heartedness which to the French seems more natural than hypocritical reserve. "What in the world are you doing here—here in the Fair of the Lion of Belfort?"

"And you, little cabbage of my heart, why are you here—unless, indeed, the Fée Maboul brought you?"

"As for that," said Pioupiau sorrowfully, "I am out of work and on my way to seek a situation."

"What a charming coincidence," cried Lise. "So am I!"

"But—here in Paris? I thought—"

"For three months." Her face clouded. "And you have never written to me in all that time."

"But I—I have written almost daily."

"Where, then?"

"To your father's address—to the care of the Contrôleur of the Forestry Department of the Deux-Bièvres."

"But, little angel-imbecile—you knew that I was no longer there—that my father

had retired on his pension. I wrote and told you everything."

"To the Restaurant Tabatier? The cruel one—then she suppressed my letters after all."

"Let us get away from this crowd. It is impossible to hear what we have to say to each other. Let us find somewhere to sit—as though we were again alone upon the Bregheul."

There was a little public garden near at hand, dominated by a frock-coated statue and quite neglected by the crowd. There, holding each other's hands, they exchanged all their recent history. Pioupiau's we know already. Lise, it seemed, realising that her father's meagre pension could not support her in idleness, had started out to find her own fortune and had made her first step towards it as *apprentie* to a *couturière* in the Avenue de la Motte-Picquet. "So close to the Restaurant Tabatier," murmured Pioupiau regretfully.

"I went there, the first day, to ask for you," agreed Lise, the tears welling into her eyes at the recollection. "And a woman—an enormous woman with a horrible face—told me that she knew nothing of you. Never will I forgive that woman. I promise myself, *chéri*, that when we have made our fortunes we will dine there one day and *écraser* that woman with our splendour!"

For a time, she went on, she had done well enough, though the mere carrying of cardboard boxes to customers' houses did not slake her ambitions. Then a terrible thing happened. She was carrying a new confection to the wife of a Deputy in the Avenue Bosquet, who was eagerly awaiting it. She had reached the house in which was the Deputy's *appartement* when, as she approached the lift, a little old lady dressed in black silk, who had been standing outside the concierge's *loge* and had listened to her inquiry, told her that she was herself Madame the Deputy going to her *appartement* and would save Lise the trouble of mounting.

"She was so pleasant-faced—so *comme-il-faut*—that—in a word—I suspected nothing."

"It is so. I was sure of it from the moment you spoke," cried Pioupiau, withdrawing his hand from hers for a moment the better to slap his knee. "The Fée Maboul! She is an evil spirit and has meant us harm from the first. It was the same old lady to whom I owe the loss of my place. Black silk—*comme-il-faut*—everything agrees."

"But—it does not follow that it was the same old lady. There are many who wear black silk. And—for that—who else but the Fée Maboul has brought us together again, by a miracle?"

"That, of course, is true," agreed Pioupiou. "But—even so—what are we to do now?"

"How much money have you?" asked Lise practically.

"I have one hundred—yes—one hundred and seventeen francs and five sous."

"And I," cried Lise triumphantly—"I have three hundred and eighty-four francs and seventy-five centimes."

"Making in all," said Pioupiou rather miserably, "five hundred and two francs. And neither of us in employment. And what are we to do next?"

"It seems to me," said Lise, smiling adorably—"it seems to me that we should get married. It is cheaper for two to live than for one. And, as you know, I am a very good cook."

* * * *

They had been married for nearly two years before it was possible for Lise to carry out her long-projected revenge upon the cruel Madame Tabatier. It happened on a Sunday, when, thanks to the institution of the *Semaine Anglaise*, the florist's in the Avenue de l'Opéra, where Lise was working, was closed on the same Sunday that Pioupiou took his monthly day off from his work at the Café-Restaurant of the Triumphs of the Students of Medicine in the rue de L'École.

"You will wear your black tail-coat, with your bowler hat and your brown shoes of ceremony," said Lise, when they were preparing for the great occasion. "For me, I shall wear my dark mauve silk, with the little grey hat which is the exact image of that worn by Madame the Duchesse de Panou, who is one of our best customers. And mind, silly one"—she was adjusting his black silk cravat to his intolerably high collar as she spoke—"remember that we enter with our chins very high in the air and cast a glance of contemptuous disdain towards the cash-desk. And we will order a bottle of good wine and all the most expensive *suppléments*." And she carefully arranged the money in her purse so that a hundred-franc note should be uppermost when it came to paying the bill.

But, as it happened, her preparations were wasted, for when they reached the Place

Ste Marthe and, ignoring the outside tables, marched splendidly into the already crowded interior, they were greeted by a leonine voice, and M. Tabatier rushed forward with extended arms, while Madame beamed deferentially from the cash-desk.

"*Tiens*—but it is M. Pierre Sigognac!" cried M. Tabatier, bending as nearly to the ground as his natural embonpoint would permit. "But, Monsieur, how anxiously we have looked for you, this six months at least. *Ho-là*, Marcel—reserve the table in the corner for Monsieur Sigognac."

"Et Madame," added Lise haughtily.

"Et Madame, of course," agreed the deferential *patron*. "But, Monsieur—et Madame—this is indeed an honour."

You will, of course, realise that M. Tabatier would not have abased himself so deeply before an ordinary client, and you will thus be the less surprised to hear that it was very true that news of M. Pierre Sigognac had been eagerly awaited for some time past, that a reward had even been offered for news of him, and that, as he subsequently mentioned to Lise, the Fée Maboul evidently felt that it was time their troubles were over. It seemed that there was a little old lady, the widow of a Greek banker, M. Petrocopoulos, who, after her husband's death, led a very retired life in her *appartement* at the Luxembourg end of the rue de Vaugirard. In her old age she became noted for her eccentricity, which found expression in her will. In it, among the legatees inheriting one hundred thousand francs each, was included the name of Pierre Sigognac, a native of the Deux-Bièvres, at one time waiter in the Restaurant Tabatier, in the Place Ste Marthe, because he was one of the very few who had respected her age and seeming poverty and had done her a kindness without expecting any return for it. There were several other bequests, almost equally eccentric, but as she left no natural heirs, and the bulk of her millions were bequeathed to the Republican Government to be devoted to the stabilisation of the franc, there could be no question of contesting so admirable a will.

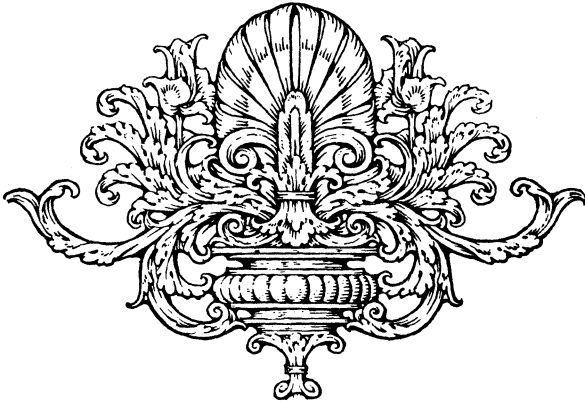
"It is a fortune, a magnificent fortune!" cried M. Tabatier ecstatically, opening a bottle of his best Moulin-à-Vent as an offering of friendship. "But no more—if Monsieur will permit me to say so—no more than Monsieur—et Madame—deserve. A thousand times I have said so—and, mark you, there are those here who can testify to it."

Lise elevated her chin until she seemed to be staring straight up at the ceiling. "It is always something," she said regally. "Almost exactly the amount we have just agreed to pay for the Café-Restaurant of the Heroes of Austerlitz, at the corner opposite the École Militaire. But no doubt it will be a help. One cannot have too much capital these days, as no doubt Monsieur knows very well."

So now, if you ever happen to be in the neighbourhood of the École Militaire and should enter the Café-Restaurant of the Heroes of Austerlitz for your dinner or your *déjeuner*—it is quite the most resplendent of the restaurants of that district and has a great following among Messieurs les Officiers—you may be sure of seeing Pioupiau, reverently addressed as M. le Patron, attired in

a smart frock-coat and brown shoes, superintending the labours of his staff with a careful kindness, while supreme in the glass-lined cash-desk, a little stouter, perhaps, than of yore, but as pleasant a woman as you need look for between Paris and Peru, you will see—and make your bow to—Madame Lise Sigognac (*née* Bûcheron), universally recognised as at once the prettiest, the most capable and the most respected wife and mother in the Quartier.

If, for that matter, growing tired of our present-day materialism, you should wish to meet someone who believes in fairies—and especially in the Fée Maboul—and is not ashamed to admit it—you can get a tram or a motor-bus direct from the Madeleine or the Grands Boulevards to the École Militaire without the trouble of changing.



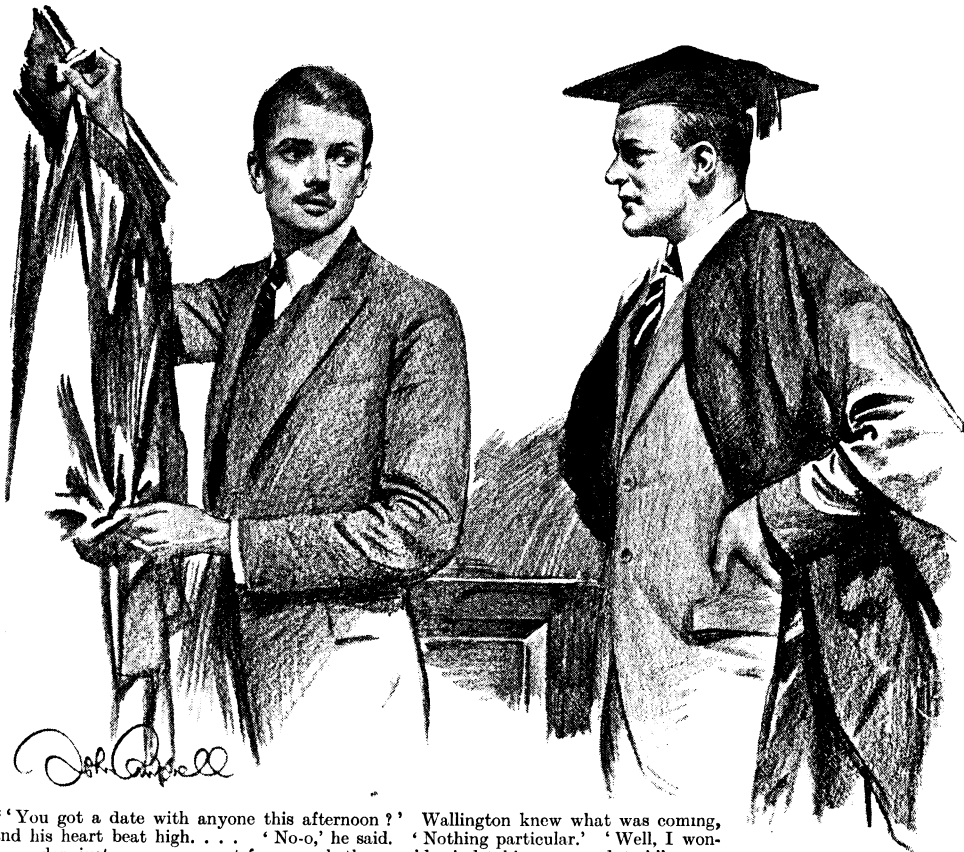
THE WELCOME.

BACK to the marshes and the sea
 I am come home in weariness,
 The pensioner of my memory,
 To beg the winds and reeds to bless
 The passion that remains in me.

There is no dyke, there is no stone,
 But will bear witness to my youth—
 My youth, how nearly overthrown !
 But here is healing, here is ruth,
 And here a comfort all my own.

While we are young we learn not how
 To be divinely desolate ;
 No other welcome need I now
 Than a rose climbing at the gate
 And a bird singing on the bough.

WALLACE B. NICHOLS.



"'You got a date with anyone this afternoon?'" Wallington knew what was coming, and his heart beat high. . . . 'No-o,' he said. 'Nothing particular.' 'Well, I wonder, just as a very great favour, whether you'd mind taking on my duty.'"

MUSICAL CHAIRS

◉ ◉ By A. M. BURRAGE ◉ ◉

◉ ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL ◉

ROBINS MAJOR held a strategic position by the window, and it was his self-imposed duty to inform the rest of the class of anything of interest which happened in the outside world. The exigencies of discipline, however, prevented him from doing so directly. Wherefore he addressed all such remarks to Mr. Wallington, thus allowing his peers to overhear and derive intellectual pleasure. On the occasion when a frolicsome old lady took a shilling's worth of donkey-ride on the sands below, and was actually thrown, Master Robins's description of the event was so graphic and so well received as to set the

seal upon his determination to become a broadcaster when he was grown up.

On this jolly June morning of sun and breeze he had already entertained a palpitating audience with a description of the chase of a panama hat which had ended, disastrously for the hat, under the wheels of a local taxi; and at least ten times had he been rebuked, and his wayward fancy led back, metaphorically by the ear, to Gubbins's First Latin Primer.

Robins was obligingly polite, and always did as he was told for perhaps the next ninety seconds. On this occasion, however, obedience lasted not quite so long, as some-

thing clamorously demanding comment appeared suddenly within his range of vision.

"Please, sir, the Morvern House boys are all going to bathe."

There was a stir of intense interest, and one or two murmurs of envy. Young Mr. Wallington, looking not very much more than a schoolboy himself, regarded the youth with an air of mingled patience, boredom and despair.

"Never mind what the Morvern House boys are doing. Stand up and tell me how many prepositions you can remember which govern the ablative."

Robins stood up, miserably aware that he couldn't remember very many. Loyal supporters, however, came to the rescue.

"But we're playing them this afternoon, sir." "If they go bathing we ought to be allowed to go bathing, sir." "How can we beat them when they've been out swimming all the morning while we've been stewing in here."

Wallington coped with all this, while Robins, looking down at his primer, made feverish efforts to commit to memory more prepositions.

"Robins, you can begin now," said Wallington, when at last he had reduced seething discontent to silent unrest.

Robins began.

"A, ab— Oh, there goes Miss Tressley, sir."

It was a shot which had never been known to miss. Wallington was betrayed into looking out of the window and scanning the road which separated the sheltered gardens from the smooth yellow sands, against which were dying the long ripples of an almost lifeless sea. The boys were too gentlemanly to cough, but they exchanged glances. Wallington was well aware of their doing this, sensitiveness lending him additional eyes.

"She's gone now, sir," said Robins apologetically.

Halkett Court, according to its prospectus, prepared boys for the public schools and the Navy. Several scholastic successes had been obtained, a liberal table was kept, special attention was given to backward boys, and the bodily care of all was in the hands of an experienced lady matron.

And yet the boys knew no better than to envy the boys of Morvern House, a rival establishment distant some quarter of a mile. There it was alleged the food was better, the holidays longer, and Morvern House went in mid-morning to disport itself

in the sea, under the envious eyes of Halkett Court—which had already been haled, shivering and breakfastless, to the beach, what time the sun was only at winter strength. Moreover, Morvern House had recently succeeded in planting two boys at Winchester.

By a strange coincidence, Morvern House also prepared boys for the public schools and the Navy, kept a liberal table, gave special attention to backward boys, and also owned an experienced lady matron. To continue the coincidence, the Morvern House boys were acutely conscious of the wretchedness of their lot, and were convinced that life at Halkett Court was all one grand sweet song.

Wallington went with the tide at Halkett Court, and honestly believed Morvern House to be a better school. But how far his belief was due to self-hypnotism because Constance Tressley was the daughter of the lady matron there it would be impossible to say. To live in the same house with Constance, seeing her every day and watching her nimble fingers count the clean collars, would have made him content to remain an assistant master for the rest of his life. Not that he was going to be content. During the long holidays he devoted himself to the drama, and one of his plays had already been produced on a Sunday night by a very, very serious society which worshipped the minor Elizabethans. He felt himself destined to become wealthy and world-famous, an undisputed leader of thought, and then good-bye to schoolmastering. But that day must come soon, for Constance was not the sort of girl to be allowed indefinitely to remain eligible.

The morning's work dragged on, but because Constance had been seen passing outside, he had already lost the thread of it. Robins major was let off the recital of his prepositions, and presently called attention to a bitter and keenly contested dog-fight. Moodily Wallington thought of making him change places with some other boy, as he had thought of it a hundred times before. But somebody had to sit by the window, and they were all alike. The bell sounded even more welcome to Wallington than it did to the boys.

While Wallington was hanging up his gown in the masters' room he encountered Hignett. Hignett was another assistant master—there were four altogether—rising thirty now and old for a first-class preparatory school. Hignett was a golf fiend, and

he had given his heart to a muscular young woman who was almost capable of playing him level.

"I've done a nice thing!" said Hignett in a low, depressed voice, accompanied by a scowl. "Forgot I was on duty this afternoon. Promised to play a round of golf with Marjory. Have to ring her up now, and call it off, I suppose."

He looked half expectantly at Wallington, who tried to hide his amazement that a man whose duty was taking him to Morvern House, there to see Constance Tressley, should not be beside himself with joy at his good fortune. Hignett waited a moment, and then asked:

"You got a date with anyone this afternoon?"

Wallington knew what was coming, and his heart beat high. He was too subtle, however, to volunteer. Let Hignett ask!

"No-o," he said. "Nothing particular."

"Well, I wonder, just as a very great favour, whether you'd mind taking on my duty. It's only the Morvern House match. And I'll take yours next time. I'd be awfully obliged, Wallington."

Wallington pretended to hesitate. It did not do to take on another man's duties too willingly. The other masters came to expect one to do it after a time.

"You're a beastly nuisance," he said slowly. "But just this once. . . . Oh, all right!"

* * * * *

Morvern House batted first, and after the Halkett Court boys had taken the field, Wallington sauntered around the ground. He had already espied Constance Tressley under the large oak, and marked the empty deck-chair beside her. He arrived on the spot without any appearance of eagerness or haste, bowed and uncovered to her and took the chair beside her.

"Hot, isn't it?" said Miss Tressley drowsily.

"Yes, rather. Real summer weather. It means that the long vac. will soon be here. You going away this summer, Miss Tressley?"

"Yes, mother and I are going to Weymouth for a month."

He started, and exclaimed aloud joyously: "Weymouth! Well, that's funny. I shall be there too. See something of you then, Miss Tressley."

A gleam of very kindly humour shone in the girl's eyes for a moment.

"Yes, I expect so," she said demurely. "It will be nice to see you."

In Wallington's mental memorandum book the word Dieppe was already erased and Weymouth substituted. The sound of clapping arose, mingled with polite jeers.

"What was that?" he asked.

"Robins has just missed an easy catch in the slips," said Miss Tressley.

"H'm. He has also used *ut* with the indicative every day this term. That boy will come to a bad end."

"How do you like it at Halkett Court?" she asked.

"So-so. I suppose all these schools are much of a muchness. But I would sooner be here."

"Would you?" she asked blandly. "Why?"

"Oh, I don't know. I've no complaint against Halkett Court, and it might seem disloyal of me if I tried to give reasons. But I would sooner be here."

"There'll be a vacancy here next term," said Miss Tressley, almost absently.

Wallington's eyebrows rose half an inch.

"Will there?" he exclaimed with deep interest.

"Mr. Cook is leaving. He has a job in Egypt. Oh, well hit, Johnston. That's ten up now. Run it out! Run it out!"

Wallington was not the man to allow grass to grow under his feet. He encountered Ferris, the proprietor of Morvern House, at teatime. They were only on nodding terms, but Wallington took occasion to better the acquaintance.

"I think a nephew of yours was up at Univ. with me," he said.

Ferris showed interest and smiled.

"Oh, yes, young Frank," he said. "He's out in Ceylon now. He's coming back this year and will be over to see me next term, so you'll probably meet."

"I may not be here," said Wallington.

Ferris exhibited more interest.

"Leaving?" he asked.

"Well, I haven't quite made up my mind," said Wallington slowly. "I should like a change."

"Tired of Beachbourne already?"

"No, not of Beachbourne. I should rather like another job here if I could get it. I'm a bit tired of Halkett Court. Please don't misunderstand me. I haven't a word against the school or the chief. I just want a change."

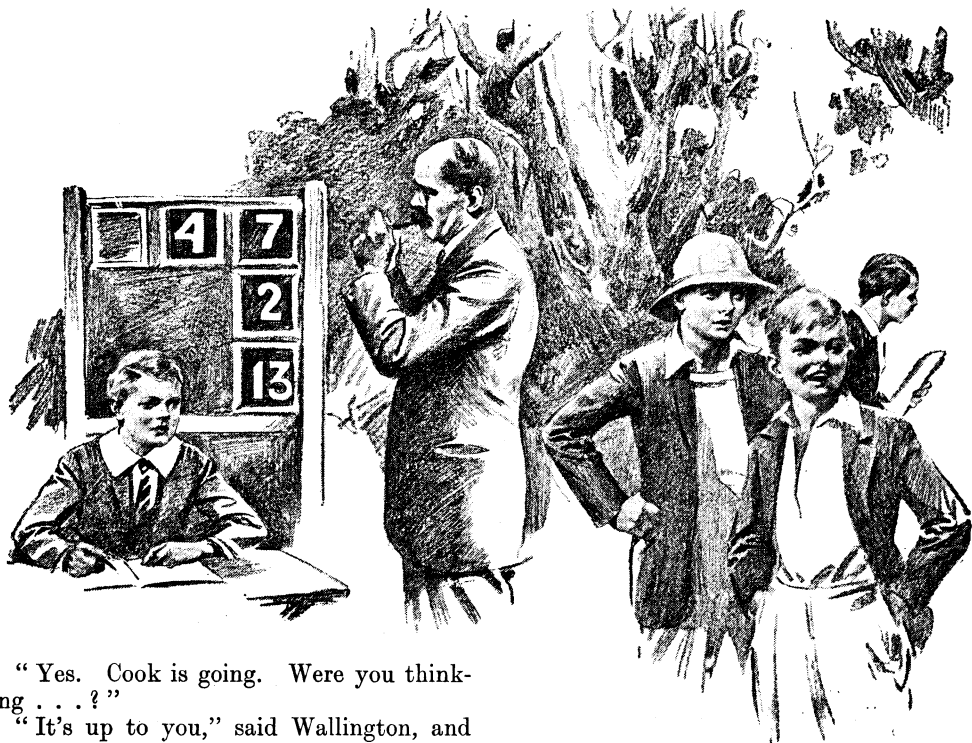
"Um," said Ferris non-committally.

Wallington hesitated, giving him a chance to be helpful, and then plunged boldly in.

"I hear you've got a vacancy next term," he said.

you that. Two-twenty is my maximum. It really is."

"And the old blighter expects his masters to marry on it!" thought Wallington. Aloud he said: "Oh, we won't quarrel



"Yes. Cook is going. Were you thinking . . . ?"

"It's up to you," said Wallington, and laughed nervously.

"H'm, well! I don't want Gadd to think that I'm taking his men away from him."

"He won't think that. I'll explain. Besides, I should be leaving in any case."

"And I'm rather keen just now on married assistants who'd live out."

"I might be able to oblige you, after a term or two," said Wallington facetiously.

"I believe in young men marrying," quoth the middle-aged bachelor. "Keeps 'em out of mischief. Still, you're the type of man I want. I want to get a man who knows something about Rugger. Rugger counts more than Classics nowadays when it's touch and go whether you can get a boy into a school. Yes, we must meet again and have a talk. All other things being equal, I'd like you to come. By the way what is Gadd paying you?"

"Two-fifty," said Wallington.

Ferris, who was making five thousand a year clear profit, rolled his eyes towards Heaven in horror and anguish.

"My dear fellow, I couldn't possibly pay

about ten pounds a term, Mr. Ferris. I'll come for two-twenty."

Ferris heaved a long sigh of relief. If necessary he would have gone to two-thirty-five, and he joyfully reflected how easy it had been to save fifteen pounds a year. There was a moral lesson in it.

"All right," he said. "I think we can consider that a deal. I'm sorry I can't pay more, but what with the cost of living and the increasing expenses it really can't be done. As it is, there will be drastic changes here next term—drastic changes."

Constance Tressley saw them talking, laughed in her sleeve, and then took herself to task.

"I *am* a little devil!" she confessed to herself. "Why have I done this? I don't know. Sheer unadulterated cussedness, I suppose. And I'm spiting myself too. He really is a darling. Will he ever forgive me, I wonder? Never mind, I can make it all up to him at Weymouth."

The Halkett Court boys returned in a

state of high elation after a two wickets victory, but their elation was as nothing to Wallington's. On the way back he gave them a coveted opportunity to buy cakes and ginger beer. He caught Wilkinson in

have given his services free and paid for the privilege of giving them.

Next morning he burned his boats by giving notice. The principal of Halkett Court seemed surprised, but he was quite kind about it. Wallington was able to send Ferris a glowing letter of reference, and within a week it was definitely decided that Morvern House was to be his future home in term-time. And then it was possible for him to break the news to Constance Tressley.

* * *

He met her on the front one warm, sweet, sea-scented evening, and strolled with her in the



'He arrived on the spot without any appearance of eagerness or haste, bowed and uncovered to her and took the chair beside her. 'Hot, isn't it?' said Miss Tressley drowsily.'

the act of buying cigarettes and turned a blind eye upon the sin. He was treading on air. What was the loss of thirty pounds, a paltry ten pounds a term, compared with the unparalleled joy of living under the same roof with Constance? Almost he would

direction which she had chosen to take.

"It's all fixed up," he said. "I'm coming to Morvern House next term."

"Oh, are you?" She looked away half guiltily, and a spot of colour burned in her cheek. "I'm sure you'll like it there."

"I know I shall," said Wallington meaningly. "Ferris seemed to think that I ought to be married. I suppose he'd pay more if one married and lived out. Rather a neck, though, to talk about marriage, considering he's a bachelor."

"He's an enthusiastic convert," said Constance, "that's why. He's going to get married himself during the holidays. Didn't you know?"

"O-oh, is he? No, I didn't know."

"And his wife is going to take on the job of matron at Morvern House. That's why mother and I are leaving."

Wallington stared at her aghast.

"Leaving!" he blurted out. "Leaving!"

"Yes. We're rather sorry in a way. But it can't be helped."

He regarded her accusingly and in dumb misery.

"Why didn't you tell me?" he demanded.

"You didn't ask me," she said, a spark of diablerie in her eyes, "and I didn't know

you didn't know. And besides, I wasn't sure that you'd be interested."

"Why on earth did you think I wanted to get to Morvern House?" he demanded. "You know I wanted to be nearer you."

She studied the ground before her feet, and bit her lip to keep back the half-penitent and helpless laughter that wanted to escape.

"I didn't know," she said softly. "You didn't tell me that. Well, we shall be meeting at Weymouth——"

"Weymouth, yes," he repeated, unmolli-fied. "But afterwards?"

"Oh, we shan't be so far apart," said Constance. "No farther apart than we have been for the last year. Exactly the same distance, as a matter of fact. Mother and I are staying on in the town."

Wallington brightened visibly.

"Oh, are you!" he cried. "Really? But what——"

"You see," said Constance, choking, "Mrs. Gregory is leaving, and mother and I are taking her place. Yes, *we're* coming to Halkett Court!"



SUMMER.

OUT of the blue the white sheep rise
 Patient and slow, where the summer heat
 Gathers in mist beneath the skies.
 They pause and graze, heads bent to feet
 Where the scent of the clover is warm and sweet.

I cannot sleep, for my heart would dream
 Of summers lost in the Past's vague blue,
 And of those to be which glance and gleam
 Before my gaze as dragon-flies do,
 Then dip into space and are lost to view.

I cannot marshal these dreams of mine,
 Or colour their forms for love's delight,
 Or even get them to dance in line.
 I can count the sheep so slow and so white,
 But dreams are impatient and young and light. . . .

IRENE STILES.



THE NEXT COURSE.

SERVING-GIRL (at very remote country inn): The gentleman says 'e wants sweets now.

LANDLADY: Dearie me, as if a good dinner wasn't enough! Well, ye'd better run down to Timmins's for three penn'orth o' fruitdrops.

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

RUTS.

By Ethel M. Radbourne.

BINFIELD was a man who had never missed a train. His days were pigeon-holed, docketed superbly neat. Even his emotions slipped into grooves—until he met Dorothy Larch. She was of the whirlwind type. The breeze of her personality swept through Binfield's schemes and routed them. He wanted her. Binfield the supremely particular wanted Dorothy the incalculable! Still, there it was.

Dorothy refused him. He tried again. She laughed. She seemed (not rudely, but with consideration) to hold him to some inner lens and find him impossible. The thing had gone so deep with Binfield that he lost appetite. He had been by way of being an epicure, but he found his food savourless. He went to see Dorothy's brother, Denley Larch, who was a friend of his.

"I feel trapped," Binfield said. "No one but Dorothy can let me out. She seems," he

said ruefully, "to have something against me. For the life of me I can't think what."

"Can't you?" Larch eyed Binfield. "Well——"

"Out with it."

"There's personality," Larch suggested. "There's calm. And there's a whirlwind."

Binfield nodded. "That's Dorothy! Sweeps me off my feet."

"Not she," Larch said. "No one could. You're anchored."

Binfield was too far gone to resent. And after all it was true. Safe things, anchors! He glanced at his watch. "Just time to catch my train."

"Ever missed it?" Larch queried.

"Never. Never missed a train or been late for an appointment in my life."

Binfield had the qualities of his virtues as well as the defects. He was no will-o'-the-wisp. He wanted Dorothy Larch and he went on wanting her. His case struck Denley Larch as worthy

of aid. He liked Binfield—thought him a good sort who'd got trapped in a band-box. He pondered a way of assistance and went one day to Binfield's town office.

"Going up to see Dorothy this evening?" he asked.

"Yes—at seven," Binfield said. "Coming up from town by the six-thirty."

"She'll be glad to see you," Larch forecasted.

"She's not, as a rule."

"Well—see her to-night."

"At seven," Binfield said. He glanced at his immaculate watch.

"Good timekeeper?" Larch questioned.

"Never let me down yet. As I say, I've never missed a train or an appointment."

"Well——" Larch held out a hand for Bin-

field. It was seven-thirty before he reached home. Should he risk City clothes and go at once to Dorothy's? He fumed. He was ridiculously irate. Never before had he been flustered. He came into the Larches' drawing-room, a new Binfield. Platitudes about the weather slipped from his vocabulary. He had been given a boost out of ruts and for once he was crisp and to the point.

"Dorothy, why do you always look at me as if I were the wall?"

"Same thing," she laughed. "Both of you are immovable."

"So *that's* the rub. Well—see here, Dorothy. To-night I missed my train."

"You *what*?"

Binfield chuckled. "Missed it." He pulled



DRESSING THE PART.

FOND MOTHER: Yus, ev'ry Saturday when 'e was playin' football 'e wore 'is father's pyjama jacket, an' now 'e's umpire if 'e ain't gone an' sneaked off with the lodger's night-shirt!

field's watch. "What make? I see. Cost you a pretty penny? Worth it. A sort of guardian angel seeing you keep safe in the ruts, eh? Hullo! What's the row in the street?"

Binfield swallowed the bait. He turned his head for a minute. The next, Larch had returned the watch to Binfield.

Binfield's plans were docketed, of course. The six-thirty train—a wash and brush up—the five minutes' walk to the Larches' house—Dorothy—

For once, though, he missed his train—Larch had seen to that. Binfield, astounded, was in time to see it steam out. He was like a man trying to speak Chinese for the first time. He was anything that stands for tempest. He fumed on the platform till the next train came—a snail of a train that stopped at wayside non-

entities. "Watch slow . . . first time in its life. *Both of us.*"

Dorothy was laughing still. Binfield hot and flustered—a missed train. . . . It was a wedge. It was a cranny through which new things might sprout.

"So *that's* the rub," Binfield mused. "Always knew there was something about me that got on your nerves. The wall and I immovable." He laughed suddenly. "Anyhow, *I've* made a move, if the wall's there still."

Binfield's friends were surprised to hear that Dorothy Larch had accepted him.

"Why?" one of them asked Denley Larch. "What changed her?"

"Binfield's watch was slow," Larch grinned. "He missed a train. Once he'd missed *something*, Dorothy felt able to make a man of him."

COLLECTIVISM.

By Violet M. Methley.

"WHAT'S Collectivism?" asked Marjorie, looking up from a book.

"What's what?" I inquired, looking down at another, and affecting absent-mindedness. It is useful sometimes.

"Collectivism," my wife persisted. "There's a lot about it here."

"Then why do you want to know more?" I demanded.

"Because it doesn't say *what* it is,—and I do wish you'd explain," Marjorie complained.

"Not at all. You'd say a 'Kendal of Kittens.'"

"I shouldn't. I've never heard of such a thing."

"That's just the point," I declared triumphantly, having lured Marjorie well off her track. "And I'm certain you've never heard of a 'Clowder of Cats.'"

"How silly!" Marjorie said disdainfully.

"It isn't. It's the correct term, like a flock of sheep, or shoal of fish, only people never speak their own language. Then there's a Fesnyng of Ferrets, a Richness of Martens, a



TACTLESS.

LUGUBRIOUS PORTER (to Smithson, who really fancies his appearance): Third, I suppose?
(Intense disgust of Smithson, who is travelling third.)

I could not—but I did not intend to say so. It seemed far, far better to become absorbed in what I was reading myself. As a matter of fact, it was an engaging volume, although the railway bookstall had informed me that it was intended as Guide, Philosopher and Friend in solving certain verbal puzzles which leave me unmoved.

All the same, there were things in it. . . .

"I bet you don't know what to say when describing several kittens," I said.

"Two," Marjorie answered succinctly.

"But if there were three or four?" I asked.

"Triplets, or—quadru—somethings."

Sleuth of Bears, and a Pride of Lions. Isn't that fine?"

"But people don't use those words," my wife persisted. "No one would know what you meant."

"We ought to. It's sheer waste of good language not to. When you speak of pigs, for instance, you should say 'Doylt' or 'Singular' or 'Drift'; then there's a Skulk of Foxes, a Harrass of Horses, and a Lepe of Leopards—"

"But—" Marjorie began, as I continued to drag my School of Red Herrings across her path.

"A Cowardice of Curs, a Rag of Colts, a Pace of Asses, a Huske of Hares—"

"Nonsense! I'm sure you're making it up," my wife declared. "There never were such words—seriously."

"Come and look for yourself!" I said indignantly. "And the birds are even nicer than the beasts. Think of a Wisp of Snipe, a Nide of Pheasants, a Skein of Geese, a Siege of Herons, a Covey of Partridges——"

"That's nothing. I knew *that*," Marjorie caught at a shred of self-respect, but I rejoined witheringly:

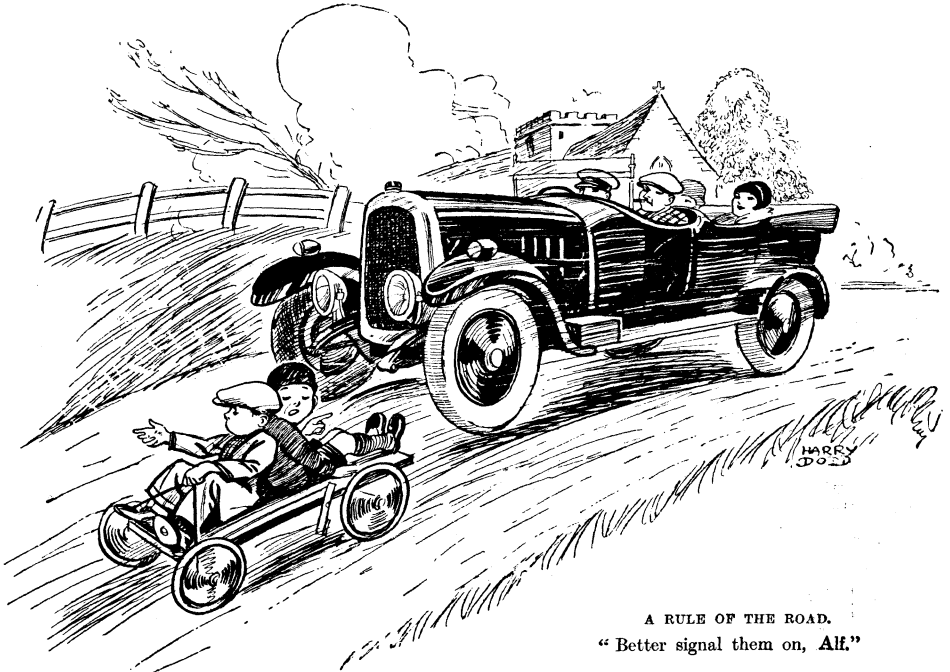
"Well, you didn't know a Dopping of Shel-drakes, a Watch of Nightingales, a Spring of Teal, or a Muster of Peacocks. Or a Covert of

TO ANY BURGLAR.

It is said that criminals can be reformed by a vegetable diet.

When you long to crack a crib
On a perfect burgling night
Eat asparagus ad lib.,
Leeks and turnips pearly white,
Then, if you devour a radish,
You will feel such work is caddish.

Honesty's inspired by greens
And a dish of curly kale,
If accompanied by beans,
Makes the stoutest burglar quail,
Or if you eat onions (Spanish)
All desire to steal will vanish.



A RULE OF THE ROAD.

"Better signal them on, Alf."

Coots, or a Desert of Lapwings, or a Company of Widgeon, or an Exaltation of Larks. And there are words for people, too; a Blush of Boys, a Temperance of Cooks——"

"No—I don't believe *that*," said Marjorie decisively.

"A Malepertresse of Pedlars, and a Non-patience of Wives——"

"Stop—that's enough!" My particular wife showed the truth of the last term by stopping her ears, and I smiled complacently. My Red Herrings had not failed me.

"And all this time, you've never told me what Collectivism is!" Marjorie murmured plaintively.

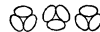
The stress of the emergency sharpened my wits; I rose triumphantly to the surface of the occasion.

"I have," I announced. "I've been telling you all the time. Those *were* Collectivism."



When you feel your jemmy's power
And recall the swag you've had
Take a meal of cauliflower,
'Twill reform you—I may add,
Though this seems a slight digression,
That "green grocing's" my profession!

Lestie M. Oyler.



A MAN in a tweed suit and leggings walked into the village butcher's shop and asked for a couple of rabbits.

"Sorry, sir," said the shopkeeper, "but I'm completely sold out of rabbits. I could let you have some nice ham, though."

"Don't be ridiculous," snapped the customer angrily. "How the dickens could I go home and say I'd shot a pig?"



A SHORTAGE of comic men is reported by a revue producer. Some of them appear to find the House of Commons more effective.

THE ONLY WAY.

By H. J. Slater.

"LADIES and gentlemen," I commenced, addressing the empty space in front of the soap-box I had just borrowed from a near-by oil shop, "I have come here this evening to discourse to you on . . ." I paused as I saw a likely-looking client who, from a distance of a hundred yards or so, looked at me and wavered. It was an ideal street corner, with trams and buses running past the end of it—a busy spot.

The crowd had increased to three, or even four, if you counted an untidy little girl of about ten sucking a damp orange. Much encouraged, I recommenced.

Again people had halted on their way and were grouping themselves round me and hanging on to my words.

"On that most interesting subject, ladies and gentlemen, Pre-Raphaelite Art, including in that term both sculpture and mezzotints from the time of the Pythagoreans up to . . ." I stopped. The space in front of me was empty again. The populace had all moved on—*en masse* as though actuated by a common impulse.

It was more obvious than ever that I was not going about matters the right way.

Undaunted, I tried again. "Fellow men and women, I am taking for my talk to you this



FORCE OF HABIT.

BINKS (having arrived at Tooting by the last train): By Jove! I'd forgotten we moved to Chingford to-day!

"I have come here, ladies and gentlemen, at great trouble and expense, to speak to you for a while about . . ." The ever-increasing crowd waited expectantly, and I raised my voice hopefully; ". . . about Ancient Greek philosophy and the rise of the sub-Nordic races. . ."

But the crowd had vanished as quickly as it had appeared. Even the little girl with the overwet orange had turned on her heel. I was not going about matters the right way, that was evident.

Taking a deep breath, I started again. "Gentlemen, comrades, citizens, I should like to say a word to you this evening on the subject of . . ."

evening a most vital subject, a subject which goes right to the heart of our national life, a subject without which civilisation would perish . . ." Again I paused. I was on the right track this time. Workers homeward bound from their honest toil, revellers sallying abroad to taste the evening air and perhaps something stronger, lovers seeking a palace of pictures—ay! even a policeman dreaming of hearth and home, suspended their predetermined activities to listen. While I cleared my throat, the semicircle of eager people rapidly thickened and became an arc.

"A subject, ladies and gentlemen, of paramount importance, namely, history—the history

of the nineteenth century viewed from the standpoint of . . ."

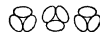
But the crowd had already gone—evaporated like water in a heat-wave. I had the auditorium to myself once more.

Something indeed was lacking. Perhaps the "pitch," despite its apparently fine situation, was a bad one. I would give it just one more chance. So I recommenced with the usual "Ladies and gentlemen." Again the multitude paused in its multitudinous affairs. Even a boy scout unshackled his alpenstock and notched a ledge in it on which to lean while he listened to what I had to say.

"The subject on which I wish to say a few words this evening is one without which human life as we know it would be almost impossible, a subject the educational power of which I

horribly husky voice, to the empty space in front of us. And within five minutes there wasn't room to move an eyelid at that street corner. As I forced my way out of the surging crowd, I heard my successor shouting:

"Four to one bar the field. I have two winners 'ere . . . straight from the 'orse's nosebag. Who gave yer Papyrus fifty to one to win? I did, ladies and gentlemen. . . ."



A FARMER, known locally as a mean employer, hired a country youth to help him with his work, and as the boy turned up at six o'clock in the morning, they at once sat down to breakfast. After the boy had eaten his fill, the farmer suggested that while they were about it they should eat dinner. The lad agreed,



THE TEST.

CLOWN (to fellow member of shipwrecked circus): Now, here's a chance for you to do a bit of sword-swallowing and save our lives!

cannot too strongly dwell upon. That absorbing subject, ladies and gentlemen, is applied ethics judged in the light of . . ."

The crowd with one movement turned and went.

But, no. Not all. One man, a slick, rat-faced, gaudily-dressed, very confident little chap, remained. I was so flattered that I got down from the rostrum and spoke to him. "No use here, mate," I said with a conversational smile; "absolutely impossible to get a crowd. . . ."

"'Ave yer finished, guvner? 'Cos I'm waiting," he interrupted.

"What do you mean—waiting?" I asked.

"Why, guvner, I'm in this line too, and I'm next on the pitch, see? You've finished? Sure? Quite sure? Perfessional hetiquette, y'know. Right."

Without more ado, he mounted the soap-box. "Ladies and gentlemen," he shouted, in a

and managed to get down a little more. Seeing that his new helper was by this time quite replete, the farmer suggested eating supper, and thus get the day's meals over.

"All right," gasped the boy, and swallowed a mouthful of bread.

"And now," cried the farmer, thinking of his saving in food, "let's get to work."

"Not likely," answered the boy; "I go to bed after supper."



THE teacher was giving the class a lecture on "gravity."

"Now, children," she said, "it is the law of gravity that keeps us on this earth."

"But please, teacher," inquired one small child, "how did we stick on before the law was passed?"

FOUND OUT.

By Wellesley Pain.

MRS. WIDDOCKS disliked fowls, but in one of her genial moments she gave Edwin permission to root up the hollyhocks near the fence and erect a fowl-house.

Edwin then bought six hens from a man who said that the birds knew their job; he might almost guarantee that the birds would lay more eggs than Mr. Widdocks wanted.

Edwin loved them. They helped him to forget the hateful City and reminded him of the happy days of his youth. Every morning Edwin got up early to feed the hens and fuss over them; every evening he rushed home and did it all over again.

Mrs. Widdocks said that she would have an egg for breakfast. But she didn't, because it was soon evident that Edwin had forgotten to ask for new-laid eggs. All three were of the shop variety and highly developed.

And you can guess what Mrs. Widdocks said to Edwin, and just how long it took her to sell the hens to a milkman.



SPECIALLY HARRY.

The boys are so tiresome in wishing to marry!

There's Robert and Richard and specially Harry,
From coaxing and flattery they never cease—

A poor girl must wed now to get any peace.



A LITTLE LEARNING CAN BE DANGEROUS.

MOTHER: And did my little pet learn anything to-day at school?

HER BABY: I learned two kids better'n to call me mamma's little pet!

On Saturday afternoons he wore gaiters and believed himself to be a poultry farmer.

But the hens were of a cold and haughty breed; they accepted all Edwin's little attentions and gave him nothing in return.

When eggless days succeeded eggless days Edwin feared the worst, for Mrs. Widdocks would certainly dismiss those hens. Life without a fowl-house would be a dreary blank.

So one evening Edwin brought home three eggs and smuggled them into the fowl-house. In the morning he announced gaily that the hens had started to lay. Here was the proof. One egg, said Edwin, was still warm—which was a lie.

Now, Richard has brains and he's sure to get on,
While Robert's a farm, though poor Harry has none.
And Robert is wealthy and Richard is wise,
But Harry, instead, has such laughing blue eyes.

My mother says Richard is thoughtful and kind,
That Robert's a lad who is just to her mind,
That maids must be wise when deciding to marry,—
So I love them all, but especially Harry.

Dorothy Dickinson.



CLERK: I'm afraid I can't tell you whether this gown would become your wife or not, as I do not know her complexion.

MR. BROWN: Oh, that's all right. I brought this box of powder and her lipstick along as a sample.

MRS. PERKINS ON MODERN DANCING.

"I'm not one of the old-fashioned sort that sees 'arm in dancing," said Mrs. Perkins, "but what I ses is it's a lost art. When I was a young gal, we did the Polka, which was one, two, three, and the Shotease, which was one hop, two hop, three hop, and the Qudrilles, which was a bit more complicated, but it was dancing all right.

"Now, when the band strikes up, everyone goes for a walk round the 'all and calls it a Fox-trot. Next time they walk a bit quicker and say it's a One-step. After that they walk and turn round now and then and tell you it's a Waltz. Well, I call that walking.

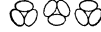
"Just lately they've got tired of walking,

in our midst is an outward and visible sign of the triumph of common sense over faddism.

Do you suppose that anyone ever reached a hundred years by worrying about the percentage of vitamins and calories in his food, or sticking to a dark and dreadful brand of bread tasting like straw hats? Not a bit of it.

If you read interviews with centenarians, you will find that most of them eat things they like, drink what they fancy and smoke as much as they want to smoke.

According to modern medical science this is all wrong, and these veterans ought to have died very young, but there they are.



KINDLY MEANT.

VICAR (who is leaving the parish): Well, good-bye, William.

WILLIAM: Good-bye zur. I be sorry you be going, for I did 'ope as 'ow you would die 'ere, zur!

seemingly, and a new dance has come out, if you can call it a dance. I 'appened to call on a lady friend the other evening, and there was her youngest gal doing things with her feet and legs which gave me the 'orrors to watch. So I ses, 'I know your Maude suffered from rickets when young, but I thought she'd grown out of it.'

"'Oh! that ain't rickets,' she ses, quite huffy like. 'Maude's practising the Charleston.'

R. H. Roberts.



USEFUL CENTENARIANS.

A NEW YORK doctor has announced that centenarians are not wanted.

I don't agree. The presence of centenarians

THE young man with the flushed face felt very proud of himself. It was only natural that he should do so, for he had been promoted to the position of chief traveller for a firm of wholesale druggists, and, further, he had the use of a car.

For the benefit of this story it is essential to note that the young traveller was a honest and truthful young man.

His first business call took place in a chemist's shop in a watering-place. He already had a lengthy list of goods on order when the white-haired chemist inquired:

"Has your firm anything for grey hairs, young man?"

"No, I'm afraid not," came the astounding reply. "Nothing but the greatest respect."

TO EVERY EMPLOYER

THE old days when the apprentice slept under the counter and was one of the family have gone; but all right-minded employers still feel some responsibility for the welfare of their staff.

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P.P. 122

THE WINDSOR MAGAZINE.

TIM'S TIME.

There's people in plenty who frequently say,
 "The very best time in the whole of the day
 Is just before breakfast, when, fresher than paint,
 They rise up like princes." I say as it ain't.
 The nicest of all, if you care to ask me,
 Is when roun' the table we sit down to tea.

The gas-light a-shinin', the fire blazin' warm ;
 The curtains behind us to shut out the storm ;
 The cups and the saucers, the plates and the knives
 All blinkin' away for their jolly old lives,
 Are laughin' : " We're ready to share in the fun
 As soon as the crumpets is properly done."

When Mother sits down in the front of the tray,
 The cake and the biscuits are lookin' my way,
 And steam from the tea-pot all cloudily curled,
 Says : " This is the cosiest place in the world."

away. Well, one night I woke up and heard
 movements in the next room. I got up and
 grabbed my revolver. Two men were there
 —and the dog."

"Didn't he bark?" interrupted one of the
 listeners.

"Never a bark: he was too busy."

"Busy? What was he doing?"

"Carrying a lantern for the burglars."



THE traffic policeman was fresh to his job
 —and looked it. He held up his hand as a
 motorist flashed through the village. The car
 slowed down.



LOOKING AHEAD.

JONES (all in one breath): Hullo, Brown, old man! Must be quite ten years since I saw you. How are you? Well, I must be getting along now. Hope to see you looking as well in another ten years' time!

And that's what I mean when I sensibly say,
 The very best time in the whole of the day
 Is when we are happy as people can be,
 With Mother and cosiness, crumpets and tea.

John Lea.



THE man was telling them about his watch-dog.

"You see," he said, "I bought him and trained him myself. I taught him to bark if a person stepped inside the gate, and I thought I was safe from burglars. Then my son wanted me to train him to carry bundles, and I did.

"If I put a package in his mouth the dog would keep it there until someone took it

"What's your name and address, sir?" asked the police officer. "You were travelling at the rate of fifty miles an hour just now."

"Why," protested the motorist, "I haven't been out an hour yet!"

"All right, sir," said the policeman, apologetically, after a moment's thought. "Go ahead! That's a new one to me!"



OLD LADY: My boy, can you direct me to the Inter-County Bank?

SMALL BOY: Yes, I can for sixpence. Us bank directors don't work for nothin'."

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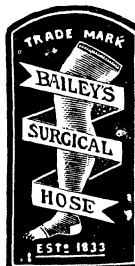
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THE PLUMBER AND THE PARROT.

MR. BYLES, plumber and gasfitter, leant heavily against the counter of the "Nag's Head" and remarked to his friend: "Things 'appen in my line sometimes, Bill, that makes you lose faith in 'uman nature." Bill said he wasn't surprised.

"But you'd be surprised all right if you knew," rejoined Mr. Byles darkly. "Why, only last night a message come for me to go to No. 2, Akasher Villas, at once, to do an important job. Natcherally I thought their boiler 'ad bust, or the geyser 'ad gone west. 'This is urgent,' I ses, so after I'd 'ad my tea and a bit of a smoke and glanced at the football results, I strolled along.

"When I got back they was still 'ard at it, only both getting a bit 'oarse. It was a ticklish job cutting the wire, with the old bird trying to peck my 'and all the while, but at last I did it.

"That was two journeys I'd made, mind you, and after hours, which means time and a 'arf, or piece-work rates, and when I'd done the old girl ses, 'Oh, thank you so much! A kind action is its own reward,' and gave me two threepenny bits!"

"Lumme!" exclaimed Bill. "What did you say?"

"Nothing. The parrot said it for me. Fair took the words out of my mouth."

"What did 'e say?"

"Stingy old cat!"



NOT THEIR COMPLAINT.

CITY CHILD: Please, Mr. Donkey-man, we gave the Neddies some carrots and they've given them the hiccups most dreadfully!

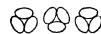
"An old lady come to the door, and she wasn't 'arf agitated. She drags me into the front parlour and ses, 'Save my poor Polly!' And blow me if the parrot 'adn't shoved 'is 'ead through the bars of 'is cage and couldn't get it back again!

"I tell you, it was a reg'lar pantomime. There was the old girl calling the parrot 'Sweet precious' and 'Poor darling lovie,' and there was the parrot saying things that I can't repeat 'ere before the barmaid.

"I saw what 'ad to be done, but of course I've got my Union to think of. So I ses, 'This 'ere's an engineer's job, strickly speaking, but as it's a matter of life and death, as you might say, I'll take the risk and go 'ome and fetch a pair of gas-pliers.' Which I did.

THE professor was illustrating to his class the remarkable smallness of the world. "Gentlemen," he said, "let me tell you of my own experience. While in Paris last summer I met a man from my home town. I met him again in Venice, still again in Alexandria, and this year, while visiting the Yellowstone, I encountered him for the fourth time."

A disgusted voice broke in: "Aw, why didn't you pay him what you owed him in the first place?"



PATIENT: What do you advise me to do, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Either go to the Riviera for the winter, or else put on more clothes.



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Something Interesting



STILL WATERS; nevertheless, in their depths are innumerable creatures of interest, whilst above the lovely water lilies float. With childish inconsequence, Chubby Cheeks and his fair companion must needs soil clothes and little hands and legs to satisfy their curiosity. But, what matter? Clothes can be changed, and there is always Wright's to wash away the dirt; to keep rosy limbs and faces free from infection or blemish.

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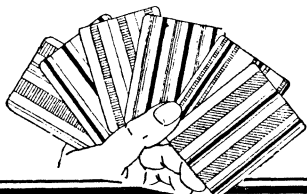
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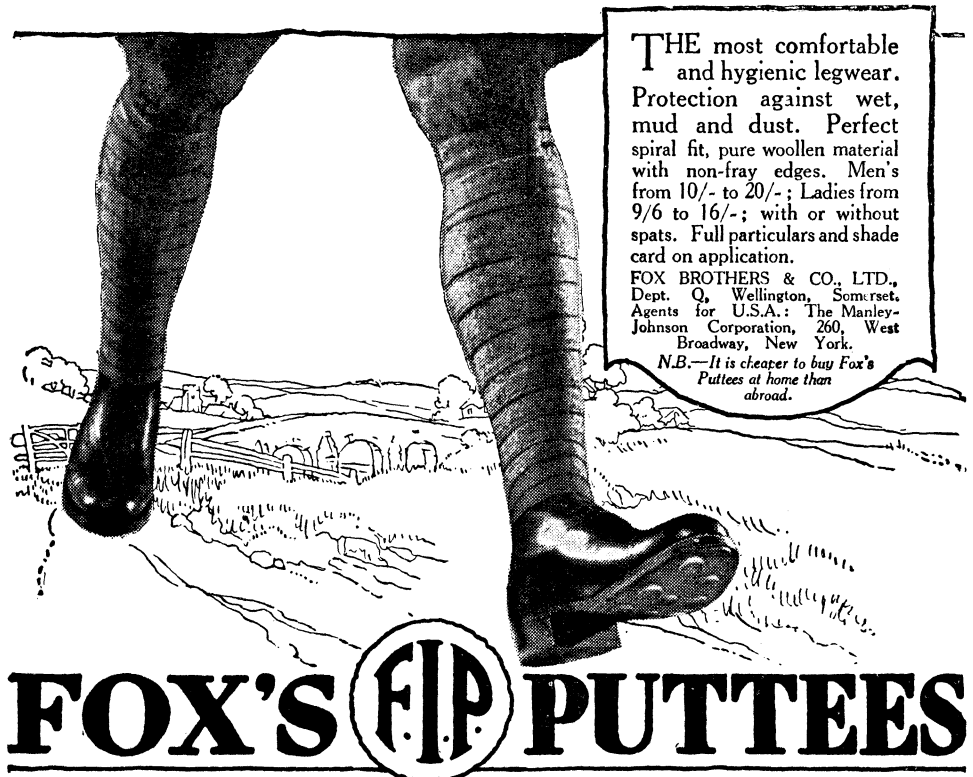
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A PEACEFUL WATERWAY.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDY BY ALLAN PHILLIP.



"An hour before sunset, Fleming came on the great find."

THE PEARL THAT CAME HOME

By H. DE VERE STACPOOLE

ILLUSTRATED BY STEVEN SPURRIER

FOREWORD.

"For tragedy in her serious or comic guise
Search the history of gems."

THE other day in London the Southern Star, one of the largest and certainly the most beautiful of the world's diamonds, was put up for auction and "failed to realise any price." I forget what the bidding went to, nor does the amount matter beyond the statement that it was absurdly small.

The stone was too big. Too big to be worn in an ordinary way. Big diamonds are out of fashion, and this everlasting crystal holding in it the beauty and soul of sunrise was turned down.

This is not a treatise on jewellery else, leaving the Southern Star aside, I would quote many instances of lovely gems neglected, left in obscurity by Taste and only

picked up at the dictates of fashion, or vice versa. The black pearl that was worth little till the Empress Eugenie made it sought after, the drop pearl that was worth much till women gave up wearing drop earrings, the opal that went out of favour less on account of superstition than of fad; a list long as the list of poets, painters, writers and sculptors, the intrinsic beauty of whose work was worth nothing till revealed by the eyes of some critic-seer.

This is the story of a pearl that came home, came at last to be appreciated for its beauty alone by a mind that knew nothing of its worth in the market-place.

I.

THE Sulu Archipelago lying to the north of Borneo contains over 150 small islands, and the most beautiful pearls in the world have

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come from here. There is something in the water of the tropic seas that lends colour to the coral and special beauty to the pearl, and of all the seas, the sea of Sulu is most highly charged with this dynamic something that finds expression in beauty.

It was in 1882, when the old Sultan of Sulu was fighting the Spaniards, the same Sultan who sold his rights in the great bird's nest caves to the North Borneo Company, that Fleming, who had got hold of an old prahu and the service of a Sulu man whose name sounded like Nakardike, was fishing for pearls—illicitly. He had come in through the southern Sibutu passage and worked up as far as Cagayan Sulu, and it was amidst the tiny inlets north of here and in view of the palms of Cagayan that he was doing his fishing.

Now if you will look at the charts or at any large map, you will see that Sulu waters are almost as much enclosed as Tidal Basin. Five hundred miles by five hundred miles, they are hedged from the South China Sea by Palawan, from the Celebes Sea by Sibuguey and all the islands to Tawi-Tawi, from the Pacific by the Philippines—a vast blue basin, where the shark shared kingdom with an emperor who impaled men for pearling without a permit. Facts that did not in the least disturb Fleming in his fishing.

War prahus might break the horizon at any moment, or a boatful of Spaniards come along, men worse than the men of Sulu—it did not matter, it was all in the day's work. No law ran in these seas to save a lawless man from extreme punishment; it did not matter, only in the lawless seas could Fleming do his job—which was plunder in all its forms, from opium smuggling to barratry. Broken in his last deal with the customs, he had come down to the Celebes, and with the profit of a lucky gamble at Mendao bought the fishing prahu and provisions for three men for four months—also the services of Nakardike and a Malay boy, Achmat.

A week ago, here, within sight of Cagayan, they had struck oyster ground and coach-whip fucus in six-fathom water, taking in six days three hundred pair of shells and ten pearls, six almost worthless, the others, at the prices ruling in those days, varying in value from five to twenty pounds apiece.

This evening, an hour before sunset, Fleming came on the great find.

Opening the last oyster of the take, a thing nearly as big as a soup-plate, he saw a bulge on the flesh near the hinge of the shell; dividing the muscle, he squeezed

gently and, like a great white bubble, out came a pearl. It was enormous; weighing maybe a hundred grains and absolutely round, luminous and perfect.

Holding it in the palm of his wet and dirty hand, Fleming looked at it. Behind him Nakardike, naked as the new moon and dripping from his last dive, stood gazing down at it; Achmat, squatting on the deck near by, gazed too, and at the kriss which Nakardike had picked up from the deck where lay his loin-cloth and betel-box.

A passing gull cried out at them, the only sound breaking the silence of that sea stretching in the sunset towards the palms of Cagayan and the Sibutu passage.

Here was all Fleming wanted. He was up in pearls.

He had gained his knowledge from Chi Loo, the opium middleman who dealt in pearls as well as opium and who dwelt in Hankow. It was Chi Loo who had given him the tip about Sulu waters. This thing would be worth maybe five thousand pounds in the open market, and as Fleming looked at it, after the first realisation of its value, he did not see it, or only as the nucleus of a crowded picture wherein figured Chi Loo, to whom he would offer it for sale, and the bars of Hankow and Formosa where he would cut a dash.

Nakardike, looking down, saw the Sultan of Sulu, who impaled men for illicit pearling. Saw also a house on stilts near the Itang River where he could live in comfort with a brown wife and unlimited credit at the Traders; saw, also, that the moment had come.

Unknown to Fleming stood the terrible fact that this expedition, though paid for by him, was entirely Nakardike's.

Nakardike was not the person to risk the anger of the Sultan for a few dollars, a month's wages. He had come with a cut-and-dried plan to be put in operation directly the pearl takings were worth the trouble of seizing and not a moment later, seeing the danger of lingering in these prohibited waters. The moment had come, and the blow of the kriss that nearly severed Fleming's head left nothing to be desired in the way of vigour and directness.

Nakardike seized the pearl, pouched it, and helped Achmat to throw the body overboard.

II.

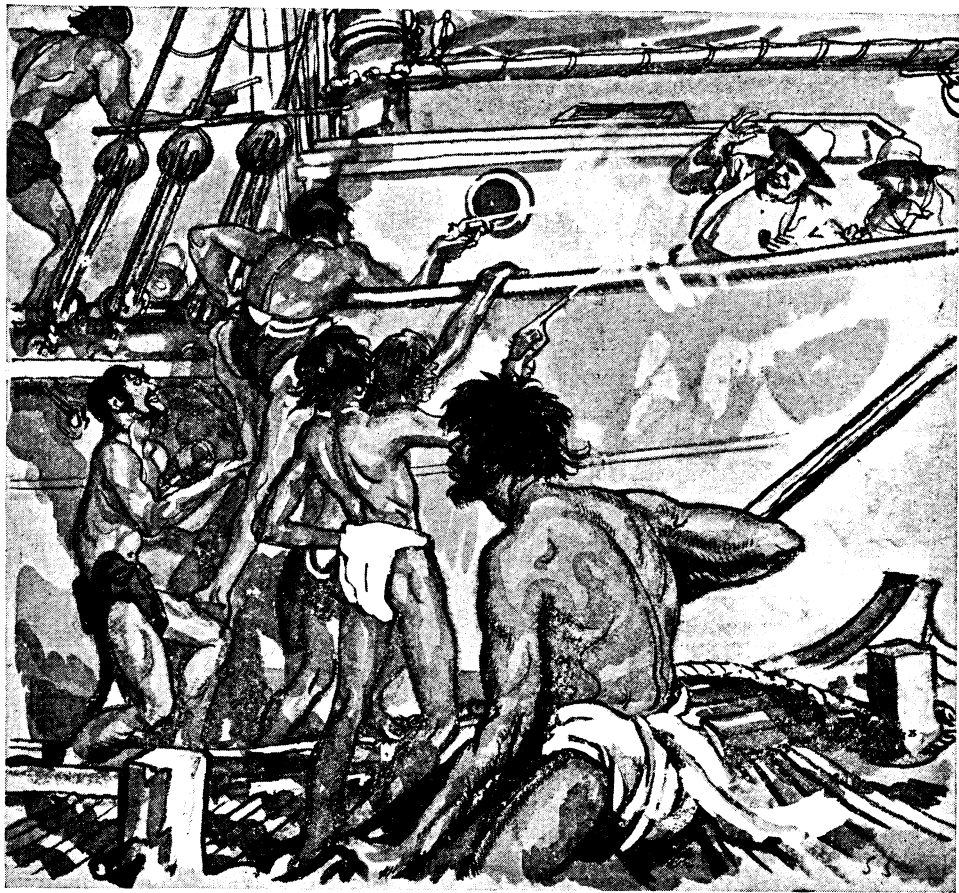
Now the Spaniards at that time had several gunboats lying by their fortified settlement, Jalo, and the smallest of these, the *Seville*,

a hundred-ton tin pot with a beam engine and a swivel gun steering eight knots and captained by the gay young spark, Lieutenant Alvarez, was cruising one fine morning between Lapanan Island and Cape Sandakan when the look-out sighted a prahu.

Alvarez was down below playing the guitar and smoking. He came on deck. The fools on the prahu had altered their course, which was as good as saying "chase me," and the

"Just so," said Alvarez, who could talk the Sulu lingo, "and that?"—he pointed with his toe at a bajak lying in the port scuppers.

A bajak is an oyster-rake made in the likeness of a hay-rake and of very heavy wood; it has a heavy stone lashed to its underpart to make it run true; it is a thing quite distinctive, there is nothing else like it born of the sea, and Nakardike, like a fool, had never



"The brig was the *Itang*, Captain Schmerder, Dutch-owned and making to Batavia from Calcutta with a cargo of cotton goods. The prahu came right alongside of her and Alvarez and his ruffians boarded her."

Seville asked nothing better; she was proud of her speed and she was aching to fire her gun. She did. She fired it, in fact, twice after the prahu had hauled her wind and surrendered.

Nakardike and Achmat received the boarders with outstretched hands spread wide open and palms up. They were innocent men, fishers who had lost their gear, natives of Timbu Mata who had no grudge against the Spanish or leanings towards the Sultan or his troops.

thought of heaving it overboard. Men do stupid things like that, especially men of the type of Nakardike and his assistant Achmat, for Providence has ordained that Murder shall always have for its shadow Stupidity, and stupidity, what is it but sister to the callousness that permits men to commit murder?

There was also an oyster-shell forgotten; there was also a stain on the deck that much scraping had not removed. A stain on the deck was nothing, it might be shark

blood or what not—but why the scraping ?

Now Alvarez, though only a lieutenant in the Spanish Navy on duty at Jalo, was a man of parts. He could reason, using facts as counters of thoughts, and that is the most difficult thing in the world; also he was thorough.

III.

WHAT followed now was most curious.

Nakardike, put through the third degree and the Spanish torture of the tarred rope, handed up the pearls, all save the great one, and had Alvarez been another man he would have departed with the loot satisfied with a good morning's work; but he was Alvarez, and taking Nakardike below into the dog-hole of a cabin, he felt his head like a phrenologist—finding not only the bump of acquisitiveness but a lump which was the pearl tied up in a bit of fish-skin and bound amidst the hair so that Alvarez had to cut it loose with his pocket-knife.

He had guessed instinctively that Nakardike was holding some of the pearls back, and he had glimpsed the little lump beneath the hair, but he never expected anything like this.

Here was—fortune. Guitars, bull-fights, a house in Seville, or, better, Paris—Paris! Paris! That was the place of all places. In five beats of a pendulum, such is the power of mind, he had mapped and coloured his future. He put the pearl in his pocket; no one had seen it. It was a secret between himself and the man of Sulu. The secret had to be sealed.

He brought Nakardike on deck.

Now this bloodhound of a man had not only scented hidden loot, but also he was convinced in his mind that a white man had been boss of the prahu and had been murdered for the sake of the pearl.

Two things told him of this, the stain on the deck and an old shoe lying in a corner of the dog-hole below.

Did he accuse Nakardike? Not a bit. He ordered his men to unshackle the hal-yard of the big sail and put the rope round Achmat's neck.

He knew that if murder had been committed both men were in the business; there was no accusation. If murder had been committed Achmat would think that Nakardike had confessed down below, putting the blame on him (Achmat), and would try to escape by a counter-accusation. It was beautifully reasoned and swiftly done, and the result justified the reasoning.

Achmat confessed everything, accusing Nakardike, who confessed everything, accusing Achmat.

Alvarez hanged them both and made a target of the prahu at five hundred yards, sinking her at the sixth shot.

Then he went back to Jalo, reported a naval engagement in which he multiplied the prahu by six; handed over the small pearls, said nothing about the great one and settled down to brood and make plans for the future. His cleverness had brought him to an *impasse*. Up to this he had been careless and happy; now, with fortune in his waistcoat pocket, he was discontented.

All the fun in the world was waiting for him and he was tied to Jalo; he was on war service and could not resign his position, he could not disclose his treasure, he could not sell the thing in the East. He had long casual talks with Ah Wong, a Chinese trader who supplied Jalo with provisions, and Ah Wong, who knew everything about everything saleable, gave it as his opinion that for the sale of jewels London and Paris were the only markets. Unless indeed one could get hold of one of the native princes of India.

But all this talk was no use to Alvarez. He was tied to Jalo and the Sea of Sulu. There was no escape for another five years at least, and he could not wait.

One day he was ordered to take the *Seville* on a scouting expedition to the Borneo coast near Maraop.

He ran her through the Sibutu passage and piled her on a charted reef near the entrance to Darvel Bay.

The boat he escaped in ran to Tarakan. Here he and his men turned pirates—they were pirates anyway—licensed up to this, unlicensed now.

This piracy business was not his intention. His intention was to get to Europe with the pearl and the small amount of money he had taken with him from Jalo; but he was more or less in the hands of his men, these ruffians seizing a big prahu and, killing the owners, were like djinns he had evoked, and he had to go with them and be parcel of their doings—and indeed he was a bit of a djinn himself.

Powerfully armed for those days and waters—they had taken rifles and ammunition before leaving the *Seville*—they were a match for anything they were likely to meet. But the business was frankly rotten. The small vessels they met in with could only supply them with provisions or tobacco. Once they got a bag of dollars and once some

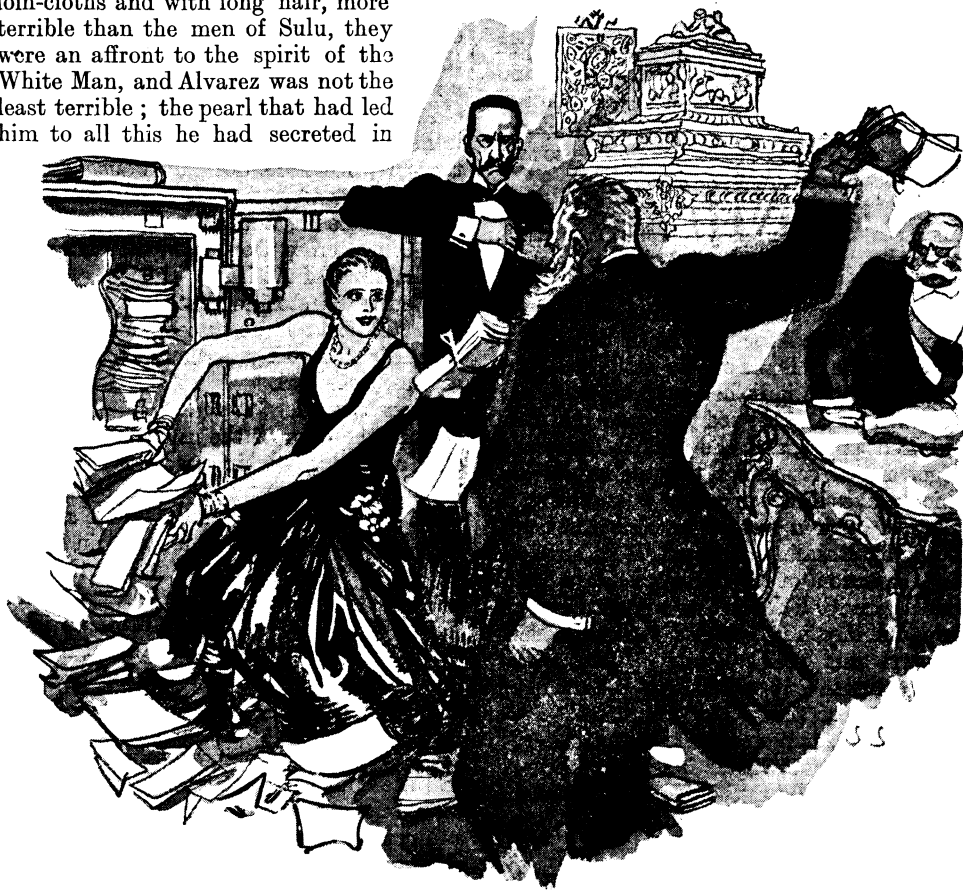
tins of Canton opium. There was nothing in it but the gamble and the satisfaction of the plunder instinct, and all the time Alvarez, though steadily degrading, kept tight to his pearl and his dreams of the West.

He was the only one of the lot who knew anything of navigation, and past Laut he began to edge them west into the Java Sea.

They had kicked off their clothes with their civilisation; naked and brown, wearing loin-cloths and with long hair, more terrible than the men of Sulu, they were an affront to the spirit of the White Man, and Alvarez was not the least terrible; the pearl that had led him to all this he had secreted in

of one another the wind failed and fell to a dead calm, and the prahu, putting out her sweeps, crawled like a venomous brown beetle across the glassy swell towards its victim.

The brig was the *Itang*, Captain Schmerder, Dutch-owned and making to Batavia from Calcutta with a cargo of cotton goods. The prahu came right alongside of her and Alvarez and his ruffians boarded her. They



"Once the door of the safe was flung open and a madly laughing woman seized the documents and flung them about on the floor, and then with one of them struck a bearded man on the face, who, in a rage, struck at her and missed."

his long hair following the hint given him by Nakardike, and the money he had brought with him from Jalo he had hidden beneath a plank below against the time when he might be able to use it.

One day off Banka they sighted a small brig coming east, and the brig, sighting the prahu, altered her course; they chased, reckoning on the small size of the prey and its timidity.

When the two vessels were within a mile

had killed the Captain and half the crew and driven the remainder below, closing the hatch on them, when—

IV.

ROUND the shoulder of far-off Gasper Island came the *Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft*, the new Dutch gunboat on the Batavia station, firing up for all she was worth and with her crew rushing to stations.

It is funny to think that all these vigorous

happenings had been, so to speak, lying perdu in a quiet old oyster of the Sulu Sea to be fished up and set free by Nakardike and Alvarez; yet so it was, and with the pearl which was the core of them in his hair and fighting to the bitter end, he was killed with all his men on May 16, 1882, in the last battle with pirates that took place in the Java seas.

V.

Now what happened to the pearl?

Who discovered it in his hair and managed to secrete it and bring it to Amsterdam and sell it for eight hundred pounds—a wretched price—to Christiaan Huygens, the jeweller of the Heeren Graght? I am not going to say. To be honest, I don't know.

It is enough that Huygens sold it for twice the amount to Knepeller of the Rue de la Paix in Paris, who sold it to Prince Muroff, who gave it at a luncheon at the Café de Paris to Margaret Steil, who, wishing to emulate Cleopatra, called for a glass of vinegar to dissolve it in. Learning its value from the Prince, she put it in her pocket instead.

It was in a little red morocco case and undrilled as yet, and she took it home and forgot it. That seems to you impossible, which proves that you do not know the mentality of such a woman as Margaret Steil. Stolen by Rosalie, her maid, it passed into the possession of M. Bourgeois at a price which permitted Rosalie to set up a bonnet shop, and if you had passed that shop with a friend and said to him, "Look, that business came out of an oyster that lived in the sea of Sulu," he would not have believed you, nor would he have believed the same statement made concerning the new café which M. Bourgeois opened that same year in the Rue St. Honoré.

VI.

In those times, just as all good defunct Americans go to Paris, all good jewels went at last to Russia—or nearly all.

It was a question of price.

Before it came to Russia the pearl had been badly drilled in Paris, a thousandth part of an inch out of the true, so it wouldn't hang properly if strung on a necklace, it had to be worn by itself on a thin chain. When Princess Anakoff opened the little box on her birthday she cried, "Oh, what a size!" Then when she heard of the drilling and that it could not be made the foundation of a new necklace she pouted, made a scene, and the Prince, who was a Minister of State, flew into "one of his tempers," tried to throw

the thing out of the window, broke a vase and went off to attend to his official duties in a condition of mind that left its small but ineradicable mark on the future history of Russia.

The pearl was locked away with other discarded jewels. It had been the innocent cause of a lot of dark work; it had killed Fleming, and Alvarez and his men, incited the spirit of thievery in the hearts of more than a few, and now it was out of harm's way or out of men's way, which amounts to the same thing. Out of the way and securely locked up in a safe in the company of some musty old documents, the title deeds of houses in Paris and Vienna, and some miniatures of the early Anakoffs done by Poushkin.

Also there were a watch by Lepine, a few jade ornaments, and a huge turquoise that had come across the Urals in a Tartar's cap in the time of Attila.

Wonderful stories that turquoise could have told had it possessed memory and a tongue. Possessing neither it was dumb—as was the pearl.

Years passed.

Once the door of the safe was flung open and a madly-laughing woman seized the documents and flung them about on the floor, and then with one of them struck a bearded man on the face, who, in a rage, struck at her and missed, whilst another man, pale and thin and dressed in black and seemingly moved by sudden fury, drew an ivory-handled revolver from his breast pocket and shot the bearded man so that he fell face down on the floor, flinging up his arms as he fell.

Then the documents were shot back into the safe and the smoking revolver with them, and the door was shut and the pearl and its companions found themselves in darkness and silence again after this momentary glimpse of the strange world that surrounded them.

For a long time nothing happened—how long, who knows?—years, during which the documents were evidently uncalled for, like the jewels, and then, one night, the doors of the safe flew open to the beating of drums and cries and shrieks and flare of torches from the street on which the room opened, and a white-haired woman was gathering everything in a pillow-slip, documents, pearl, jade ornaments and all.

VII.

NEXT thing, after many weeks, a blaze of light and the pearl was in the hand of Ben Oued, the jeweller of Constantinople.

Then in a few weeks it was in London in the office of Romanes, the dealer, and a thick-nosed elderly man with a flower in his coat was saying :

"I should like to buy something for my wife, something of character. Diamonds? No, she has all she wants—ah, let us look at that pearl—badly pierced, worth very little!"

"Pearls are jumping every day, Mr. Gunderman," said Romanes, filling a glass with water and putting the pearl in the water, where it instantly and almost completely vanished from sight, thus proving its worth. Then he weighed it in a little scales, then he put it back on its chain.

"How much?" asked Gunderman.

Two hours later the new purchaser came back to the Universal Hotel where he was staying. Mrs. Gunderman was having afternoon tea at a little table in the dance-room. She was stout and florid, and when he gave her his present and she opened the box and saw the great pearl on its little chain she thought from its size that it was false, also it was on a twopenny-halfpenny-looking little chain.

"It's platinum," said he, referring to the chain, then he told her the price he had paid and she lost her temper. She had set her mind lately on emeralds. She had said nothing on the matter to him, but subconsciously and half-consciously she had been turning towards emeralds, and now this thing which did not appeal to her at all—and at such a price!

He told her that pearls were increasing in value, that they were jumping every day.

But the activity of pearls did not interest her. She said not a word about emeralds, but she frankly told him he had been "done." She had to say something nasty, and unconsciously she said the thing that would hurt the most, reflecting as it did on his business capacity.

The accusation of doing a man (within the limits of the law) would have been something of a compliment, but to accuse him of being done—well!

Flying into a temper he left her and sought solace in the American bar.

Then, when they came down to dinner at half-past seven, he found she was wearing the pearl as a sort of make-up to him. He had recovered his temper, and as he sat opposite to her during the meal his eyes travelled about the room.

"You don't know how well that pearl looks, Sarah," said he. "It's a new idea

wearing one strung like that. Look at all those women and their pearl necklaces and not one genuine, I bet; you see, they make them now so good you can't tell the difference. But that thing tells itself for genuine at once, because no one would wear an imitation alone like that."

"I suppose so," said she, without disclosing the fact that she had quite made up her mind to get him to sell the thing and purchase the emeralds she now acutely longed for.

"I must get it insured to-morrow," he went on. "It will go in with the rest of your things at Lloyd's." He took a gold cigarette-case from his pocket and gave her a cigarette, then he lit up and a little later they stepped into their limousine and were driven a hundred yards away to the Empress Theatre.

Here they forgot everything for a couple of hours, returning to the Universal and their suite, where Gunderman was just in the act of pouring himself out a whisky and soda when his eyes became fixed on his wife.

"Where's the pearl?" he asked.

It was gone.

The platinum chain was there, but the pearl was gone.

Everything was there, even the little platinum wire that had pierced the thing. The wire had broken, that was all.

Like demented creatures they ran about the room searching the carpet, under the chairs, everywhere. He examined her dress, shaking out the folds . . . nothing!

Bidding her stay where she was, lest by some chance it might be stuck somewhere in her clothes, he came out in the corridor hunting along to the lift, rang up the lift, searched its floor and came down in it; burst out of it like a bomb-shell, calling to the attendants to help in the search.

"A pearl, a big round pearl. I gave a large sum for it to-day. It's gone. One hundred pounds to whoever finds it!"

But it was not to be found.

Out in the Court of the Universal you might have seen men who seemed hunting for mushrooms by lamplight—a quest that would have been just as fruitful. It was gone. And it was not insured.

VIII.

PATRICK SWEENEY, aged thirteen and a bit, yet not looking it, being stunted by environment and heredity, was coming to the end of a perfect day.

He had played truant from school, earned

sixpence by taking a message for a shady-looking man to a shady public-house, which message had caused two other shady-looking gentlemen to arise and go forth in a hurry only to fall into the arms of the police; fished for sharks with a bent pin—till chivied away by the police from the landing-stage near Cleopatra's Needle; seen a corpse being brought ashore at Westminster Bridge; received, after an hour's vigil outside a tobacco shop close to Charing Cross, two cigarette cards, one telling the history of the Gloire de Dijon rose and the other the history of the Discobolus, both illustrated; stuffed himself with gum-drops and two saveloys and seen a dog run over.

That was all mixed and good and brought him to lighting-up time and the news of the day exhibited by a newspaper sky-sign. Here he learned that Trojan had won at Kempton Park and that Mussolini had sent a message to the League of Nations and that Lloyd George was suffering from a chill at Churt.

Divided between Fleet Street and the West, he chose the latter, and was rewarded by a taxi-cab accident at Piccadilly Circus.

Theatre turning-out time found him now in the Strand, and coming along by the Empress Theatre, the eyes that took in everything in heaven and earth and on the pavement saw a big white bead which was promptly pouched, also a cigarette end that lay a little farther on, which he stuck in his mouth and lit with a mouldy old match found after much searching.

Then came the thought of Home, and Cassidy's Rents.

IX.

CASSIDY'S RENTS were not closed for the night, in fact, when he arrived, Billy Melhan, a person of his own age, was just arriving home from the Opera—at least from in front of the opera-house in Covent Garden, where he had had no luck, and Pat's mother had only just gone to bed in the room which his father, his mother, himself and little Noreen called their home.

The door was on the latch—they are all honest people there anyhow, there's nothing to steal—and the elders in bed were asleep, and snoring like two people chloroformed and taking the anæsthetic badly. But Noreen, eleven years old, in the rag-bed on the floor near the window, was not asleep.

A wee white face showed in the moonlight. She was half sitting up on her elbow. She had been waiting for Pat. He generally

brought her something, and as he took off his old boots before getting into bed beside her, fully dressed as he was, the whisper came in the moonlight, "What 'a' ye got me?" followed by the answer, "Cards—and them"—he put the dirty paper bag holding three last gum-drops in her hand. Then he remembered the bead and handed it to her.

It made her forget the gum-drops.

It looked beautiful in the moonlight; it was like a little vague lamp, and it held the sick child, for she was very sick, so that she forgot to ask for the cards, and he forgot them too, for he was in bed beside her now snuggling down under the old quilt, and almost at once he was sleeping a sleep that many a rich man would have bought at a pound a minute.

Not only did the bead look like nothing else, but it felt like nothing else, so smooth and friendly and warm. She noticed the little hole in it and guessed it was meant to put on a string; but she did not want it on a string, she only wanted to hold this lovely bead and look at it and turn it about and feel it.

Then the fear came to her that Pat would want it back. Pat was that sort, though good-hearted enough; he had taken back several things he had given her.

She fell asleep with it in her hand, and it was there when she awoke in the morning, her father gone to work, her mother scolding Pat, who was pulling on his boots, and the sun shining through the dirty window.

It looked even more beautiful when she had a peep at it in the daylight when her mother's back was turned, and days later when Mrs. Sweeny asked her, "What are ycu hidin' under the pillow, Noreen?" the answer came, "Nothin', mummy; it's only an old bead Pat give me, but don't tell him or he'll be wantin' it back." And I doubt if Mrs. Sweeny would have taken it from her had she thought it of value, for Noreen was "going out," and when some days later she was gone, far, let us hope, from Cassidy's Rents, her grubby little hand was holding something tight—her last plaything, which nobody tried to take from her—and rightly, had they only known, for she was the only person who had loved the thing for its beauty and for itself.

Yet all the same, true to the history of gems, it was tragic—this wealth in the hand of one who had died from *tabes mesenterica*—which is one of the many Latin names doctors give to Poverty.

MY CRICKET REFORMS

◉ By JACK HOBBS ◉
SURREY COUNTY CRICKET CLUB AND ENGLAND

THE cricket championship of 1927 is now well launched and already followers of the game are estimating the effect of the new method of reckoning on the destination of the season's honours. Any direct effect I scarcely expect to be appreciable, for the raising of the 60 per cent. of points for a first innings lead to 62½ under the present law will not make a marked difference to the fortunes of a county throughout the season.

But there is a vital clause in the new championship rule which makes for a most important change in the play. That is the decision that six hours' cricket in any match, even if so little progress is made that each side has not completed an innings, qualifies that game to be ranked as a draw instead of a void match, as would have been the case under last year's reckoning.

Let me explain the true inwardness of this, which may not be at once apparent. Previously, if a highly-placed county were engaged in a game which at best could not progress beyond the completion of an innings by each side, it was not unusual for that county to try to avoid completing even the first innings. A lead on the first innings to a county already having over 60 per cent. of points meant a drop in the table of positions. It was even more disastrous to the losing county that had at least a percentage of twenty.

On the other hand, a game in which both sides did not complete an innings was last year ignored altogether in making up the table and left the positions of the contestants as they were. Players of the stronger counties particularly were not slow to see how they were more adversely affected by a first innings lead than by a match that never progressed so far, and, human nature being what it is, it was not surprising that in games in which it was always apparent that a

decisive result was impossible, and even a completed innings by each side problematical, the inducement for both sides to avoid an adverse result—that is, to delay play as much as possible—could not often be resisted.

It was a deplorable evolution of the rule which the makers could never have foreseen, and all against the true spirit of cricket. The wonder is that it existed unchanged for so long, for the games in which I have taken part where one side was trying to keep the other in, were, if not numerous, far too frequent. They became wearisome to the players, and no wonder complaints came from spectators when the lack of energy among the players became all too apparent.

Curious incidents in the course of these games I can recall in plenty. One player scored a century against Surrey at Kennington Oval, but the records do not show that at least twenty of his later runs were presented to him in the sense that the bowlers were not trying to get him out; they did not want that dreaded first innings lead and time was nearly up. A cheap century, indeed.

There have been cases of batsmen who were obviously l.b.w. and the umpire knew it as well as the bowler and wicketkeeper, but nobody appealed, and the official could not put an end to the batsman's innings.

I recall another occasion when one of our bowlers was faced by a "rabbit" of a batsman, and in the circumstances all the fielding side were very charitably-minded and hoped sincerely he would get a few runs—indeed were anxious, as anxious as he was himself, that he should do some good to his average. But at once he stopped an obviously "straight one" with his pads and—there was no appeal. But to our horror the umpire had not waited for "How's that?" His arm shot up towards

the heavens and the situation, as awkward as it was laughable, was not relieved until short-slip was heard to mumble "S'that?" The batsman reluctantly left his crease, and as he passed the umpire I heard him mutter something about no right to give "out" until appealed to.

There was the case of a batsman who had had the position carefully pointed out to him and been enjoined to score so that the clock left him hopelessly in arrears. Surrey might then avoid that first innings lead when a chance of a decisive win was out of the question. He was always going uncomfortably fast, however—his rate of scoring approached 15 an hour—and with the last over we were within three of our opponents' score.

Even then there was no reason why he should not avoid getting the runs. But one of the "enemy" bowlers was sending them down rather fast and a "lucky" snick to fine-leg beat wicketkeeper and fielders and went to the boundary. I never knew a "four" create such gloom among twenty-two players, and it makes me laugh still to recall the unhappiness of that batsman when his colleagues voiced their opinion of him.

All this is now changed. No longer will one of the leading counties be found playing to avoid a first innings lead. No doubt even under the new rule such an indecisive result with its 62½ per cent. bonus will be a disadvantage to a club with a higher percentage in the table, but it will be less disastrous than a draw with its fifty-fifty splitting of points. No more dragging out the wearisome game to its time-limited length. All to the good, therefore, this particular change, even if it does not go quite as far as some of us would have liked in the effort to give "pep" to the county championship.

An ideal championship is difficult to construct and our climate will always have a word to say in the working of the best-laid scheme. But I have long been attracted by the Football League method with its two divisions and promotion and relegation. The older generation may be horrified at the suggestion; the older generation frequently are horrified at anything new. But proved popular attractiveness has a soothing effect.

We can all recall that Saturday starts were a reluctant concession to King Demos, and yet who would now revert to the Monday openings? We are like that. First we prove that a change is impossible, then adapt ourselves to the new order and fight for it as we did for the old.

The counties divided into two divisions would have to play home and home matches with all the others. The hope of promotion would restore to the matches of the second division all the attractions lost by the absence of the strongest sides. As for the success of the First Division, the stronger competitive element would be a powerful magnet to the public. There is no blinking the fact that at present the visits of many of the "smaller" clubs are poor entertainment at the more spacious grounds.

Naturally there would be fewer matches, but I cannot help thinking that we play too much cricket. Here, again, the question of finance enters, as it must with regrettable frequency into county cricket. Professionals whose remuneration is on a "per match" basis might not like the innovation, but greater public patronage of matches might solve that problem and enable the counties to pay such improved terms as would keep the local league "wolf" from the fold.

Every League match would have to be played out, for simplicity would have to be the keynote of the new competition. The man in the street hates percentages and all that is not obvious at a glance. Four days then, if necessary, to each game, which the shorter fixture list would allow. An engaging fantasy, perhaps, all this, but to the cricketer not so fantastical as the suggestions that were seriously made for heightening and widening the stumps or narrowing the bat when the sad case of the overworked bowler was agitating the public mind. At any rate, the spirit of progress is abroad in cricket.

There are still advocates of the two-day county matches, but the shorter games had a fair trial in the 1919 season, and I am convinced that two innings games cannot be restricted to two days, no matter how extended the hours of play. There were too many draws, although we played from 11.30 to 7.30 on the first day and 11 to 7.30 on the second, and that was too long for the bowlers and exhausting enough to all players. The spectators also did not relish staying so late.

Only one innings matches would make the two-day arrangement feasible. I have never quite understood why it should be thought necessary that a cricket match should consist of two innings, though the elimination of one innings would certainly remove the chance of such dramatic victories as that of Hampshire in 1922 at Edgbaston, when, first dismissed for 15, they followed on and scored 521 and won by 155 runs—

a curious persistence, by the way, of the figures 1 and 5.

The longer and shorter fixture lists is but one instance of the too great licence allowed the individual counties. Covering of the wicket should be made compulsory upon all, so that after rain a start should be possible immediately the skies clear. Common consideration for those who support the first-class game demands it.

Surrey do not cover the wicket before a match, but Middlesex at Lord's do. Essex also cover the wicket. So that at the start

conditions of which all could take advantage. If I am asked whether they were the best team in the competition—that is another matter. I am inclined to think they were not, but this admitted, it would not be the first time that a side not the best had carried off the honours.

One curious outcome of Lancashire's success for me personally was that certain critics accused me of helping Lancashire to win because, forsooth, in a great first innings struggle in Surrey's game with Yorkshire at Kennington Oval the Surrey

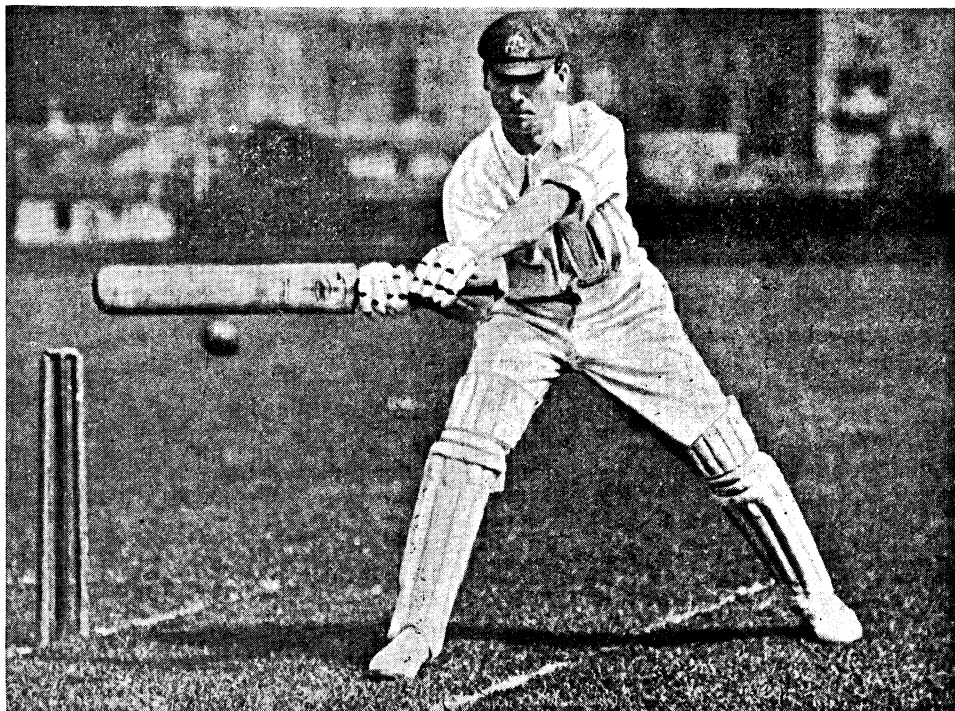


Photo by]

JACK HOBBS BATTING.

[Sport & General.

of a match after a rainy day we may have the anomalous position of clubs, batsmen, and bowlers engaged in the same competition within a few miles of each other operating under totally different conditions—dry wickets and wet.

Lancashire cover the wicket, but Yorkshire, the next county, will have none of it. All that must have a bearing on the championship, for which the conditions should be the same for all, or as nearly equal as legislation can make them.

I have on occasions been asked if Lancashire were deservedly champions last season. The answer to that is that they won under

batsmen generally, and myself in particular, made great efforts to head Yorkshire's total, and that I, for one, took such an unconscionably long time about scoring a century that a decisive result was out of the question.

I suppose nobody would contend that Surrey were not entitled to make as big a fight as possible, and if our rate of scoring was slow the Yorkshire bowlers were not blameless. Trying to prevent us getting the runs, they exploited the leg theory to an inordinate degree. Naturally the Surrey players were not going to walk into the booby trap, and if many balls were left

alone, surely some responsibility rested with the Yorkshire attack, the methods of which may fairly be described as defence not defence. If they thought that policy was their best, it is not for their partisans to complain afterwards that it did not pay.

It is a strange commentary upon this charge against Surrey that when Middlesex won the championship in 1921 Surrey were accused of helping the Southerners by adopting an entirely different policy. On our last innings we had time, by fast scoring, to win the match. We went for the runs; our batsmen failed, and we lost.

We knew that the result decided the allocation of the championship, for a draw would have sent the honours to Lancashire. But we were out to beat our London rivals if we could, no matter how the interests of Middlesex or Lancashire were affected. One time, therefore, I am accused of playing for Lancashire against Yorkshire, another time for Middlesex against Lancashire. What is a poor batsman to do except to play for his own county, which in my case is Surrey. (v)

I think Yorkshire were the best county side last season, but I was quite satisfied—I dare not say pleased—to see Lancashire win the championship. Yorkshire have had such a run of success that they can well afford to let it go for a season.

The manner in which people talked before the season started about the smaller ball suggested that they thought it was to be about the size of a golf-ball. Spectators will no doubt be surprised to find that they notice no difference at all. To the players only, and the bowlers especially, will the change mean anything, and even to them, I suspect, not very much.

We have had balls as small, even smaller, before. Indeed, I was looking the other day at a ball which we used in a test match at Birmingham in 1924, and it is smaller than anything we are using this season. Cen-

turies were made easily enough before 1926, and will be frequent enough this season to cause no surprise.

I should further help the bowlers by giving them a new ball every 150 runs instead of every 200 runs, as at present—rather this than any of the drastic changes in the bats and wickets that were so glibly put forward towards the end of last season.

One gentleman known in the councils of the game told me a few weeks ago that he favoured a new ball every 100 runs. I would not go so far as that, not for English wickets, although it would probably be a welcome rule in Australia and South Africa, where the wear and tear is so much more severe and balls get cut up quickly.

There are changes of ball when the seam bursts open or other unexpected defect develops quickly, but the rule in England last year was, and is now, that the substituted ball should be one showing about the same amount of wear. I remember that in the second 1926 test match at Lord's a substitute ball had to be found for a defective one, and there was difficulty in satisfying both sides that it showed just sufficient wear and no more.

No similar rule is in force in Australia and Africa. When a ball becomes defective, there it is replaced by a new one, and in our last tour in Australia we had a regular succession of new balls at short intervals in one innings of a test match. In the very first over a cut so exposed the stitching that a new ball was at once requisitioned. The second did not last long, and so the changes went on. I am sure that innings set up a record in the number of new balls required owing to a variety of causes.

All bowlers like new balls, as they flight better, and a trifle more pace can be developed. That is the reason why bowlers are much more dangerous during the first few overs of a new ball, a notable example being Maurice Tate, of Sussex.





“Robert Grey . . . My God! yes, I am not likely to forget. The man he saved was—is—my elder brother.”

THE UNEXPECTED

◉ By JOAN SUTHERLAND ◉

◉ ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL ◉

PRISCILLA came into the vestibule of the Hotel de Crillon and stood pulling on her gloves while she looked about her, at the big fire blazing at the vestibule's farther end, the comfortable chairs, the lounge where the orchestra played, the desk where business was so ceaselessly transacted, last but not least, out through the revolving door to where the Place de la Concorde lay in the winter sunshine.

Beyond that door was Paris . . . and only a woman incurably romantic, eager for life and of unspoiled tastes and character, knows quite what that one word means. Paris : shops . . . theatres . . . gaieties and irresponsibility . . . Paris, where things happen that never happen in the prosaic world of home . . . Paris, where dreams come true. For Priscilla had dreams, dreams that she hugged closely to her, that had

kept her courage unfaltering, her sympathies always alive, through ten years of work and worry and grinding monotony.

And now it was over ; she was free from the unceasing claims of the invalid father and the home that she and her young sister Jill had shared with him on the outskirts of Winchester, and her first thought when all details were completed was Paris. Jill, aged twenty-three, had been more than willing, she was as weary and infinitely more rebellious, so the business affairs being settled, the house, comfortable and dull with its small garden, was let furnished, the two neat middle-aged maids staying with the tenants, and the two sisters departed for France.

So far, the holiday had been all Priscilla had expected ; this morning was the end of the first week, and she and Jill had seen Versailles, spent hours in the Louvre, visited

the Luxembourg and prowled about the Latin Quartier, heard Mass in Nôtre Dame and walked in the Bois; they had shopped too, discreetly if not extravagantly, and one of the results was Priscilla's dull-red beaver-furred coat and dull-red hat in which she stood waiting for Jill.

Two girls jumped out of a limousine and came into the hotel followed by a man—Americans the girls, judging by their accent—and Priscilla watched them with intent interest; they were so young and confident, so sure the world existed to give them all they wanted; their incredibly slim young figures were in knee-length flared coats, furs muffled were about their chins, their eyes bright and eager looked out under the down-pulled, close little hats.

"No letters for me? Just look again—oh, my dear, Marcel wants us to go on after the theatre to-night to dance—some new place—do you want to?"

"We promised to meet your Russian, Vera—at Kasbek—and join their party——"

"Oh, we've done all that a million times. Let's dance instead. We can always join them if we want to."

Their high, quick voices, their air of half-suppressed excitement, intrigued Priscilla. She glanced at the man who had accompanied them and now stood a little way back, a cigarette between his fingers. He was of good height, broad-shouldered, lean; his features rather powerful, his face deeply lined and clean-shaven, his eyes a light steely blue. He gave her the impression of one who lived intensely, who was possessed of immense vitality both physical and mental, and suddenly, as if her intent scrutiny disturbed him, he turned round and looked at her.

Their eyes met, held an instant, his glance penetrating and keen as a sword-blade; then Priscilla turned and walked towards the doors conscious of a queer vibration through every nerve.

An instant later she heard her name and Jill was beside her, as slim and young and short-skirted as those other girls, and was pulling her back to the desk.

"Just a minute, Priscilla. I want to ask the porter the way to Martella's," and once again Priscilla found herself facing the man who had now sauntered over to one of the chairs and was finishing his cigarette in peace.

"Vera's going to telephone Marcel," one of the girls was saying, "won't be a second——" and Priscilla saw a sardonic little smile hover round his lips.

"I'll wait just ten minutes," he replied, and his voice was deep and clear, an attractive and very masculine voice. "If Vera's not ready, then you and she can finish your morning alone, my dear."

There was an outcry, but he refused to rescind his ultimatum, and Priscilla was conscious that he was watching both her and Jill, and the consciousness disturbed her and the disturbance was annoying. It was so silly, so gauche, even to notice that an entire stranger appeared to be interested in her—she was not a schoolgirl or a raw miss from the country . . . she wondered if she should light a cigarette while she waited . . . that would show she was modern and used to the world . . . he was quite courteous even though he was watching her so intently; he was evidently the type of man who was so sure of himself and his position in the world that he never thought of either. He was extraordinarily vital . . . most men did not look either interesting or particularly attractive, they were just men . . . as Jill turned away from the desk Priscilla smothered a little sigh. He was not of her world, and she was not of the age to attract men any longer . . . the forties loomed already in the middle distance.

"He found the way, Priscilla." Jill's clear young voice caused the stranger to turn and deliberately look at her. "Quite a long way, near Les Halles. Hadn't we better taxi?"

Priscilla rose, and together they went towards the exit.

"Yes. And this afternoon we can go to see *Sacré-Cœur*," she said. "About half-past three, then we'll come back to tea at Sirdar's for a treat." Jill said "How divine!" ecstatically, gave the man the benefit of the direct unselfconscious gaze that is the modern habit and followed Priscilla out into the winter sunshine; and all that day, although Paris was its most entrancing self, Priscilla was conscious of a little odd envious pain. Those girls—they had so much. In the days when she had been their age her time had been spent in attendance on her parents, little home duties that were quite unnecessary but were deemed wholesome training, sedate holidays at an English seaside village or among the mountains of Wales, an occasional party and the going to London for concerts, and, rarely, a Shakespearian *matinée*. And the years had passed and her youth with them, and she had never known the careless enjoyment of modern life or the attentions of men as her

right. And that man—he had looked at her, then at Jill—well, Jill should have the chance she had never had, Jill who was just as pretty and young and smart as the girls he had with him.

At Marcella's the clothes were charming, and Priscilla bought with sudden recklessness a dance frock, all sea-green georgette and sequins, knee-short and fluffy, for Jill, which sent that young thing into ecstasies of delight, and then set about the question of an escort to restaurants where Jill might dance.

They had one family of French friends, a middle-aged, highly successful lawyer and his wife, Maître and Madame Givel, the latter very smart, and the next evening, as luck would have it, received an invitation from them to dine at Henry's; so Jill wore the new frock, Priscilla a black lace, and they drove to Henry's with a pleasant little feeling of excitement.

As they sat down at one side of the little restaurant Jill uttered an exclamation.

"Look, Priscilla! There's that man!" And Priscilla looked and saw just across the room the man she had tried to put out of her mind all day with no success, in company with the two girls and another man.

"Is it a friend of yours?" Madame Givel inquired. "American? He looks—interesting."

"Oh no. He was at our hotel yesterday," Jill said. "The girls are staying there, I think. We just noticed them, didn't we, Priscilla?"

"Yes," Priscilla said. "Attractive, aren't they? Oh, they're going to dance."

All four had risen, despite the fact that their dinner had just begun, and Priscilla saw that the man moved with the smoothness and ease of a born dancer; twice he passed their table, then on the third round she was aware that he had given all four of them a long searching look which she met fully for a moment and then looked away from, aware that her pulses—well-regulated things she had never before noticed—had quickened, and that her breathing was suddenly unaccountably disturbed. Strange . . . ridiculous . . . hardly realising the unusualness of her remark, she turned to her host.

"Won't you dance? It's such a good little band."

She saw Maître Givel's momentary look of surprise before courtesy veiled it, and heard the answer she expected.

"I am so sorry, but I do not dance. You are fond of it?"

"Yes. Does Madame Givel dance?"

Fanchette Givel shrugged her shoulders.

"Not now. Guillaume is bored with it, so I am the good wife—sometimes!"

Priscilla laughed, knowing her, and had to endure the music and watch the dancing while her feet twitched to be on the floor. The evening was by no means exciting, and when she saw Jill stifling a yawn she rose to make her farewells. The room was full, and as they went towards the door they were halted by the dancers; the man she had watched drew his partner aside so that she could pass to the exit, and she met his eyes—curious eyes, very penetrating and alive—said "Thank you," knowing he was English, and saw him flash a glance at Jill's golden head and then was in the street and getting into the waiting taxi. It was Jill who voiced a sudden complaint:

"What a deadly evening, Priscilla! I *did* hope we'd dance! If only we knew some men over here—there was that Englishman again with the American girls. They danced all the evening, lucky little wretches."

"I wish we did, darling. It was deadly for you. I was so sorry."

"Just as bad for you!" Jill said quickly.

"Let's try and pick somebody up!"

"I shouldn't know how," Priscilla exclaimed, half laughing. "And if I did, I shouldn't know what to do with him afterwards! Never mind, Jill, you shall have as good a time as I can give you, and we shall surely meet someone we know soon."

She saw the two American girls again the next morning, and that afternoon, when she was approaching the Hotel de Crillon to meet Jill, who had come home a little earlier, she was knocked into by a man who jumped out of a car that had drawn up outside. The impact was sharp, for neither had noticed the other, and the man drew back with dismayed apologies in rather halting French. He was young and fair and obviously American, and Priscilla put him hastily out of his misery.

"It's all right, you didn't hurt me," she said with the smile that lit up her rather plain face and made it beautiful. "I was not looking either."

The young man, seeing she was going into the hotel, stood back for her to enter, and as he came behind her into the hall spoke hastily.

"It's stunning of you—it was so clumsy of me," he said, and then seeing Jill approach,

broke off, stared, flushed, and with a murmur that might have been a farewell or not, went on to the group near the steps leading into the lounge, which Priscilla saw to her interest consisted of the man and the two American girls.

Jill chuckled as she sat down at the tea-table she had chosen.

"You managed to pick somebody up after all!" she remarked. "And he looks very nice, too. Don't lose him again just yet. He'll do to dance with me very well —" And at the same moment across the

daughter? Nonsense! Sisters. And a very charming woman, too."

"Simon!"

"Oh, Simon! Have you fallen for her? What fun—Simon's caught—now I come to think of it, he's been filthily bad-tempered the last two days. That's the reason."

He endured the teasing with complete indifference, then rose to his feet.

"You're a pack of youthful idiots," he remarked. "I'll ask the management to bring you mugs of milk and what d'you call the things



"You're a dear, Priscilla, and don't dare to say you're too old. Perhaps some nice widower with half a dozen children will ask you to marry him."

you tie round your necks? Feeders. Yes, that's it. I'm off now—had enough of the nursery."

There was an outcry of annoyance, but he strolled away, stopping quite near Priscilla's chair, but behind it, to light a cigarette in a singularly slow manner, just in time to hear clear, rather mournful words in Jill's voice:

"If only we'd had the chances other girls have, Priscilla! It's just too late for us somehow!" and Priscilla's quick reply:

room young Lawrence Hunt was being teased by his sister in much the same vein.

"You didn't choose anyone very startlingly beautiful, I must say!" Hazel was saying. "Now, the kid's attractive. Her daughter, I should think, shouldn't you, Simon?" Simon Wyndham, who had been looking across the room, started at the sound of his name. "What's that? Her

"It shan't be too late for you, my darling. And you needn't worry about me. I'm too old, anyway."

What a voice! Low and rich—golden notes in a crystal beaker—he'd read that somewhere long ago and laughed over it, but it was true, after all—he waited, eaves-dropping shamelessly to hear her speak again.

"You'll enjoy the opera to-night, anyway, Jill dear—and the seats are splendid."

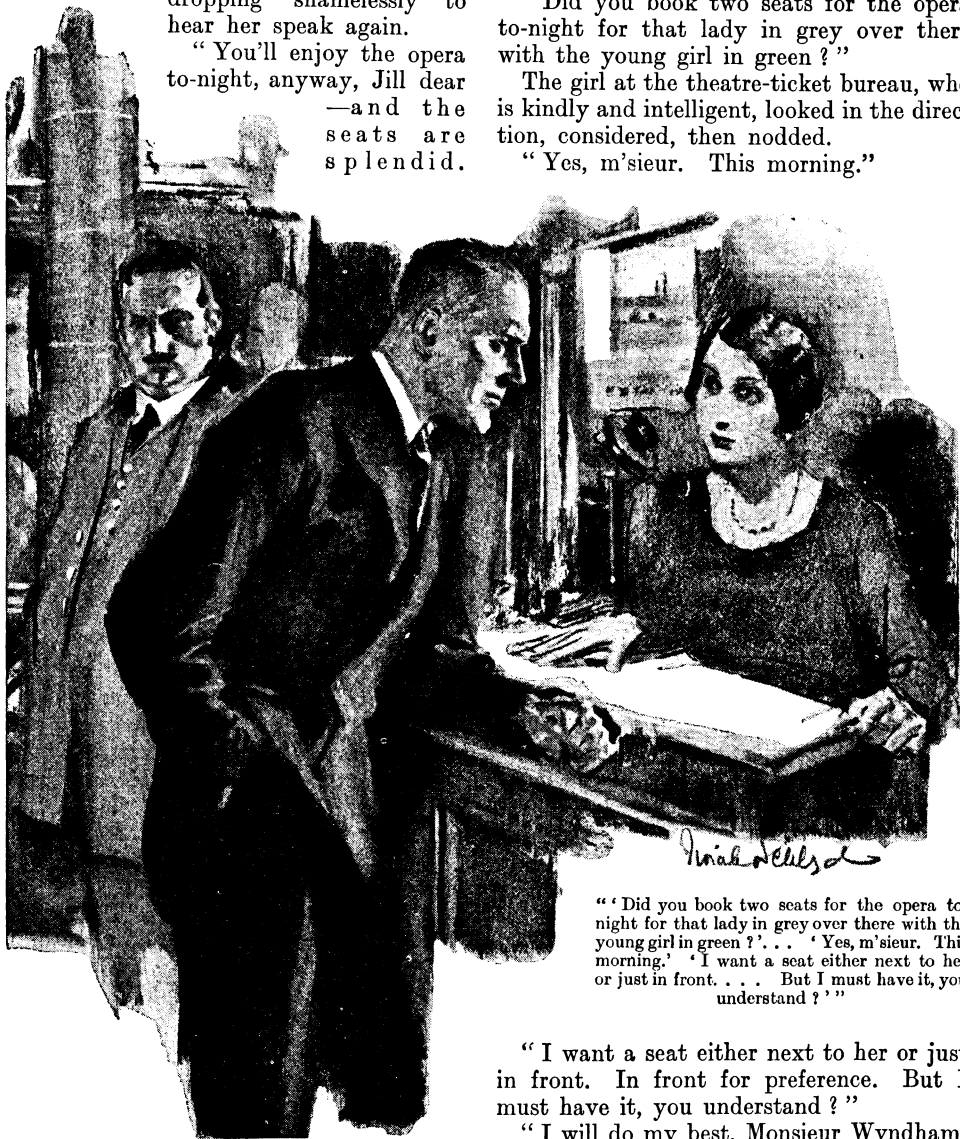
"Because you'd make such a lovely step-mother if they were lonely or unhappy. You're positively wasted on just one sister like me."

Simon Wyndham waited to hear no more; going to the ticket bureau he spoke in rapid and singularly perfect French.

"Did you book two seats for the opera to-night for that lady in grey over there with the young girl in green?"

The girl at the theatre-ticket bureau, who is kindly and intelligent, looked in the direction, considered, then nodded.

"Yes, m'sieur. This morning."



"'Did you book two seats for the opera to-night for that lady in grey over there with the young girl in green?' . . . 'Yes, m'sieur. This morning.' 'I want a seat either next to her or just in front. . . . But I must have it, you understand?'"

"I want a seat either next to her or just in front. In front for preference. But I must have it, you understand?"

"I will do my best, Monsieur Wyndham, but"—she shrugged—"it may be impossible."

"It must not be impossible, mademoiselle," Wyndham said harshly. "There is a way to do these things and you must do it. You understand?"

Jules, the head-porter, came up at this instant to see if he could be of any help;

Middle of the tenth row."

Jill's clear young tones answered:

"You're a dear, Priscilla, and don't dare to say you're too old. Perhaps some nice widower with half a dozen children will ask you to marry him."

"Why the half-dozen?"—he could hear the tremor of laughter in her voice.

he understood very well. He knew this English monsieur from the Embassy, knew quite well that he was exceedingly wealthy and exceedingly generous to those who served him; as he had said, there was a way if one took enough trouble, consequently that night just as the overture began Priscilla saw a figure she knew already well enough for her peace of mind slip into the stall immediately in front, and felt herself begin to tremble. It was absurd, chance only—he had looked at Jill so intently and Fate seemed determined that he should constantly cross their path. Supposing by some means he made their acquaintance? Supposing he fell in love with Jill—lucky, lucky Jill, pretty, self-assured, *young*—Priscilla set her sweet, soft lips in a hard line and closed her eyes as the music and voices swelled together, knowing in that moment a bitterness almost of death . . . the knowledge of the lost youth that had been stolen from her, and of the lonely days to come . . .

She opened her eyes, conquering her self-pity as she had conquered so much in her life concerning herself, to rest them unwillingly or not on the broad, flat shoulders and well-poised head immediately in front of her—what good lines his head had, the bones of forehead and temple, the hard leanness of jaw that she could see as he shifted his position slightly, the air of complete ease that spoke of fine breeding. Who was he? Someone of consequence, if her instinct told her anything. . . .

Three hours later, standing on the steps and trying to get a taxi in a flurry of suddenly falling snow, Priscilla heard a voice speaking to her.

"Forgive me, but I'm afraid taxis are scarce in this storm. May I offer you my car? You're staying at the Crillon, I believe, and my man is going back there to call for my sister."

The sentence, spoken rapidly, brought Priscilla round to find the man beside her, bareheaded, quite courteous, despite the unconventionality of his behaviour, and before she could collect herself to reply he had spoken again.

"I could not help seeing you had been waiting some time. Please forgive my speaking to you. My name is Simon Wyndham, and I am at the English Embassy."

For a second, Winchester, the shades of the Cathedral, canons and their wives, the correct dullness of the little house on the Romsey road, flitted across her mind, then,

as calmly matter of fact as he, she had measured her man.

"It is extremely kind of you. We shall be most grateful."

The next instant he had Jill lightly by the arm, was piloting them both down the snowy steps and into the limousine that had drawn up at the curb.

"I am honoured," he said with a sudden curious touch of old-world formality. "The Hotel de Crillon, Jacques."

He was moving to the seat beside the chauffeur when Priscilla spoke quickly.

"Please do not ride out there. It is too cold after the heat of the house."

He looked at her, an intent look that brought a faint colour to her face, though her eyes were steady.

"You do not mind?"

"On the contrary, I should mind very much if you caught pneumonia," she said with a little smile, and the next moment he was sitting facing them and they were gliding away down the Rue de la Paix.

He was silent, not wishing to disturb her and content with the first move he had made, and it was Priscilla who spoke first.

"My name is Priscilla Grey and this is my sister Jill, and we are seeing Paris as thoroughly as any tourists. It has changed since the War."

"Your first visit since then?"

"Yes. My father was a great invalid and after my brother's death at Neuve-Chapelle we could not leave home."

"He was given a posthumous V.C.," Jill said in a soft, proud little voice. "He was only twenty-two—Robert Grey. He brought in his commanding officer from the wire in broad daylight—and went back for another man—he was shot—"

"Hush, dear," Priscilla said quietly, but Simon Wyndham made a sign of dissent, and his own voice was very quiet, though it vibrated with a sudden strong emotion.

"Robert Grey . . . My God! yes, I am not likely to forget. The man he saved was—is—my elder brother." Just for a second there was the silence of utter amazement, then Priscilla was aware of a firm close grip of her hands and of his face in the dim light, curiously intense, his eyes dilated.

"I never guessed—never dreamed—" For the first time in his life he was moved deeply enough to be unable to hide it. "My brother and I are the closest of friends. . . . I can't tell you what it means to meet you—to have the chance of telling you what your brother's name means to us."

And the next minute, the result, perhaps of his association with Frenchmen, Simon had carried her hands to his lips and kissed them as the car drew up at the hotel.

"I must see you again," he said hurriedly. "Miss Grey—both of you—you're staying on?"

"For the present." Priscilla hoped her throbbing nerves did not sound in her voice. "But——"

"Then I shall find a way—my sister—I will be formally introduced——" He smiled for the first time and his smile like Priscilla's was charming. "For the moment—good night—and God bless you."

In Simon's world and life to want a thing badly enough was to get it. He found an acquaintance of his own who knew the Givels, an introduction to his sister was arranged and the matter carried formally through, the sister in question being one of the two girls Priscilla had believed to be both Americans; and two days later she received a note sent by hand from a suite in the hotel.

DEAR MISS GREY,

Will you dine with my brother and myself at the Meurice at nine to-morrow night? My father is arriving from England and will be wild to meet you. We can go on and dance later. You mustn't refuse.

Yours gratefully,

MONA WYNDHAM.

Priscilla, her eyes shining, decked Jill in the loveliest of newest frocks, felt just once a sick pang of envy, then followed her into the taxi and drove to the Meurice.

The rest of the evening was like a dream or an adventure from a fairy-tale. Lord Roxmoor, tall, white-haired, handsome, had tears in his hard blue eyes as he greeted her. His daughter Mona with all her extravagant modernity kissed both sisters and whispered a quick endearment, and the young American cousin who had charged into Priscilla outside the Hotel de Crillon did not take his eyes off Jill. They talked and dined and talked again, only Simon was rather silent sitting opposite Priscilla and next to Jill. They found one or two people they all knew, but Roxmoor needed no common acquaintance to bridge the gulf between him and the sisters of the dead boy who had saved his son.

"I tried to find his people," he said to Priscilla as he sat beside her in Simon's car on the way to a place to dance. "I was

told his father had just died—there seemed no one else . . . my fool of a lawyer did not know of your existence. My dear, you do not know what this means to me—what it will mean to my wife—that we have found someone belonging to that splendid boy——"

He left them at the dance, and when he left he stooped and kissed Jill's flushed, flower-like cheek, and Simon, taking her from his father, swung her into a waltz, while Lord Roxmoor turned to bid good night to Priscilla.

"My wife will be writing to you, Miss Grey," he said. "And if I am permitted I will call on you on Friday."

It was the next dance when Simon came up to Priscilla, and Priscilla, miserably conscious that after Jill she was a bad dancer, was not at her best; despite the amazing, unbelievable thing that had happened, she was depressed, and Simon realised it, wondered if the whole affair had been too much for her and suggested they should sit out the next dance, which Priscilla, who had twice stumbled and failed to respond to his leading, was glad to do.

They talked formally, and she realised more than ever how his personality affected her and how cruelly her youth had vanished, and it was a little hard to respond eagerly enough to Jill's excited conversation when they got back somewhere about one o'clock to their hotel. Priscilla did not sleep much that night; instead, she lay awake and thought of the evening and of her own unattractiveness and of Simon. He had said good night, he had not kissed her hand, he had made no mention of seeing her again, although she realised that he would certainly do so . . . but only probably out of gratitude, for, after all, what was there in her to attract him, a dull, provincial, plain woman? And Priscilla suddenly buried her face in the pillow and cried, even while she tried to laugh at herself for being so utter an idiot.

She came in about half-past three from a fitting the following afternoon to see if Jill had come back from some shopping, and came face to face with Simon Wyndham pacing restlessly up and down the vestibule. He stopped short when he saw her, then came straight across and stood in front of her.

"I thought I'd missed you," he said. "And I've an official dinner to-night or I should have asked you to dine with me. I want you to come for a drive and then I'll take you to tea somewhere. My car's outside."

His manner was odd; he was unsmiling. He did not attempt to shake hands and when she said:

"But, Jill—I——" he interrupted almost roughly.

"You can leave a message for your sister. There's something I want to say to you. Please come," and the next minute, meekly, she obeyed, and found herself in the limousine beside him.

It was snowing again and already growing dusk, not at all the time or weather for a drive, and she had heard his curt order to the chauffeur, "Drive in the Bois till I tell you to turn back," before he got in beside her.

Up the Champs-Élysées they sped, and when she glanced at him she saw his face was set and began to wonder why he had brought her, why he wanted her company if it was only to drive in grim silence through the cheerless winter afternoon—and even as she opened her lips to ask him, he turned round, looked at her for a moment, then took her hands in his.

"Priscilla," he said, and all the grimness had gone out of his face, "Priscilla—I had to see you alone and there was no other way. I suppose you'll think I'm mad, but I was never saner. My dear—oh, my dear—that first moment when I saw you I knew just what you meant—I knew that if I couldn't get you no other woman would ever matter any more—Priscilla—my dear—my darling——" He pulled her close to him, crushed her lips with his own, and Priscilla, gasping, pulses hammering, brain on fire, sank down against him, unbelieving, bewildered, only knowing that death, now, at this instant, would be a small price to pay

for the ecstasy of this moment. And then his mouth was lifted from hers, his eyes, no longer cold and steely, were looking into her own.

"Say you can care—marry me—I love you—I love you——"

She drew back, pushing her hands against his chest, her throat swelling.

"Me! You can't mean me—I'm not young or beautiful—you're laughing at me, you're——"

She got no further, for he was crushing the breath out of her body.

"Not young? Do you think I want raw youth? What does a young girl know of love? You are the most beautiful thing in the world. . . . I knew . . . when I saw you smile—and your voice—Priscilla—oh, my dear—if I were dying that voice of yours would draw me back from Death itself!" Even then she could hardly believe.

"You know nothing of me—I've lived just an old maid's life—your father—your people——"

"My father knows. I told him. I've followed you all my free time these days since I saw you first. I'll spend all my life trying to make you forget the dullness and the loneliness you've had. Priscilla! Say you love me!"

Priscilla looked up at him and forgot she was thirty-seven, forgot she was plain, forgot she knew nothing of his world.

"I love you!" she said, and her golden voice made him tremble.

"Kiss me—my lips!"

And Priscilla put her hands behind his head, drew down his face to hers and kissed him.

MOON MIST.

MOON mist is drifting down,
Riding upon the air,
Turning your wind-blown hair
Into a shining crown,
And silvering the town.

Life never can be real
Upon a night like this—
A touch, a word, a kiss,
And we on star-paths steal
To loosen heaven's seal.

The silver heights and gold,
Light-heart, light-foot, we tread,
Life's commonplaceness fled.
And still we know from old
Dawn will be clear and cold.

GEORGE LAWRENCE ANDREWS.

◦ A MODERN ◦ SIR GALAHAD

◦ By R. W. ALEXANDER ◦

◦ ◦ ILLUSTRATED BY E. G. OAKDALE ◦ ◦

THE boat, canted a little to one side, came drifting down-stream, slowly, evenly, a white speck on the tranquil bosom of the river. The wind that whispered in the trees and the osiers went far above it, for it was low in the water, almost awash. It went with the current, midway between the banks, drifting, drifting. . . .

Where a tent made a triangle of white against the green of the trees, where the river washed softly on a curving beach of pebbles, the boat's journey came to an end. A man was swimming strongly from bank to bank, brown arms agleam in the sunshine, heels kicking a little ripple to the surface. He saw the boat, caught it in one hand, and swam on. For, you see, it was a paper boat, such as children make.

The man, landing on the pebbly beach, shook himself like a dog. He was young, big, broad in the shoulders; the silken bathing-dress he wore revealed muscles that jumped into sudden hard prominence when he moved. He had the pleasant face and candid eyes of one who has seen enough of life to be amused by it. Many would have called him handsome. His name was Peter.

Very carefully now, with fingers infinitely patient, he unfolded the sheet of paper that had been the boat. It was ruled across with faint blue lines, and in the middle was a smudge which had been writing in pencil. It looked, Peter thought, like a page torn from a child's exercise-book. With some difficulty, guessing at words altogether illegible, he partly read the message, which ran:

"Help! We are prisoners in the big grey house. . . ."

After that, Peter was baffled. Puzzle over them as he might, he could not decipher the words that followed.

"That's the third," he said, crumpling

the paper into a ball, tossing it into the river. "This is getting beyond a joke."

He stared up-stream, speculation in his grey eyes, the muscles of his arms a little more prominent than usual. But the river, here, ran through woods deep and high, and of the big grey house he saw nothing. He reasoned that there could be a dozen houses within half a mile of him, without his knowing anything of them. But obviously this particular house was beside the river. Little enough to go on, Peter thought.

He went into the tent, towelled himself, and dressed. A pair of powerful binoculars was hanging from a nail in the tent-pole; he took them, stuffed them into one pocket of his jacket, and went out.

It was June, and very warm; as he struck swiftly up-stream he was grateful for the shade of the trees. He walked lightly, arms and shoulders swinging, chest out. He walked close to the bank of the river, yet far enough from it to escape observation from the opposite side. And he walked very quietly.

He had covered perhaps half a mile when, across the river, he saw among the trees a big grey house. Its windows seemed to wink at him in the afternoon sun, seemed to hint of dark mysteries hidden behind their innocent blankness. There was a high-walled garden running from the house to the river and, set in the end wall, fronting the river, was a boat-house, its wide doors closed. That, Peter, examining it, thought, was suspicious, very suspicious.

He selected a tree, swung himself from the ground, and climbed. He went up and up until all below him was a sea of green, with through it the river like a broad street of silver between narrow fringes of brown. He could see now into the garden at the back of the house. It was a beautiful

garden, with roses and apple-trees and beds of flowers making splashes of colour against its green lawns, and grey paths winding here and there. One of these, broader than the others, led from the back of the house to the boat-house. Beside it, resting on its keel, was a canoe, white as snow, with at either end short brown decks. And in the canoe a child of about five summers was playing.

Peter, sixty feet or so above the earth, seated himself precariously, took out his binoculars, and watched the child, who, all unconscious of this espionage, arranged gravely in order upon the deck of the canoe short pieces of stick, leaves, and pebbles taken from the path. Peter, though he looked very carefully, saw no paper lying about.

For a long time, then, he watched the house. He saw a man come out into the garden, smoking, wander about for a while,



"'The ghost of the manor,' said Peter, feeling as if icy water was being poured down his back, watching that small white figure walking so quietly towards him. . . . The little figure reached him, passed, went on down the stairs.

It was the child Peter had seen in the garden, dressed now in a nightshirt, obviously and soundly asleep."

himself, and went slowly back to his tent.

Entering, he halted abruptly. Everything seemed exactly as he had left it; but he knew that, during his absence, the tent had been visited. For, there upon the coverlet of his narrow camp bed, was the blood-red crumpled petal of a rose.

He sat down upon the bed, the betraying petal in his fingers, and thought. In the past few days, three little boats of paper had come drifting down-stream, three little boats made from pages of a child's exercise-copy, pages with hurried scribbles across them, all pleading for help. And how many others may have gone by unseen? The first Peter had regarded as some attempt at humour, the second had aroused his interest, the third had set him thinking that perhaps, after all, these appeals might be genuine. But why the devil should anyone who carried roses visit his tent? That seemed unanswerable; but, for him, from

and go in again. A dog appeared, and played with the child. A cat appeared, and was chased

by the dog, taking refuge in an apple-tree. The child left the canoe, called the dog, and went into the house. And Peter climbed down from his perch, stretched

that crumpled petal came the fragrance of Romance.

There was a moon that night, a great golden orange coming up from just beyond the trees, hanging just above them, laughing at its own reflection in the river. Peter came out and looked up at it, and from the shadows about the boles of the trees a voice seemed to whisper, very softly, "Peter!" Peter, hearing, started a little, and with a few quick strides was among the shadows whence had come this ghost of a voice. But the shadows were empty. Of course, he told himself, he had known they would be. He told himself this very bitterly.

"A night for adventure," he said, staring up at the moon. It smiled back at him, encouragingly. How many adventures, he thought, it had watched, yet was always ready for more! "Peter, my boy, we'll go and see what the big grey house has for us."

He set out quickly through the trees, making little noise for all his swiftness, hearing the thousand and one furtive noises that combine in the whispering of the woods at night, seeing dark shapes that flitted across his path, big owls that came and were abruptly gone on silent wings. But he had been in the woods at night many times before, and now these things, well as he knew and loved them, interested him little. He was in search of adventure.

Adventure he found where the grey house bulked dimly through the trees. The river was a sheet of gold, with little ripples that chased each other from bank to bank. In the middle of this gold was something round and dark, something that moved. To Peter it looked very like a head. Now what should anybody be doing, swimming about at this time of night in a river deep and quite possibly treacherous?

Peter watched the head, hopeful that it was warning his way. It was too, until, for an instant forgetting himself, he stepped a little from cover, when the head turned with a quick swirl, and made rapidly for the opposite bank. That was annoying, and Peter said things under his breath. But that didn't mend matters, and in a very short time the head went in among the shadows of the trees, a good hundred yards distant. Then for a moment Peter, keen-eyed, saw shoulders rise from the water, a slender figure, white limbs below the black of a bathing-dress; quick-eared, heard tiny splashes and the stir of leaves. And after that all was still.

"Well!" said Peter, who was in his way

a philosopher; and he went back to his tent. But the moon had shown him what it could do, and he craved still further adventure. He changed quickly into his bathing-dress, slipped on a pair of rubber shoes, old flannel trousers, an old jacket, and set out again.

He went up-stream above the big grey house and there, sitting on the bank, a shadow amidst shadows, disrobed. Then, his clothes in a tight bundle upon his head, held secure by his belt about them and beneath his chin, he slid into the water, and struck out quietly for the opposite bank. The ripples he made stole away and away, endless moving curves of gold. . . .

"That's that," said Peter, dressing. He was rather uncomfortable, but what was a little discomfort on a night like this?

The house looked very big, the wall about the garden very high, in the light of that smiling moon. But Peter was an athlete, and a tree near the wall afforded him the only ladder he needed. He leaped from a bough to the top of the wall, crouched, glancing quickly about him, dropped into the garden with no more sound than a soft thud. In the shadow of a hedge he squatted for some time, listening, hearing nothing but the noises from the surrounding woods, the murmur of the river; peering about him, along black and silvery paths, towards the grey bulk of the house, seeing nothing but shadows that danced lightly where leaves stirred beneath the kiss of a wind too languorous for him to feel.

Satisfied that he was alone and unobserved, he moved along the path beneath the wall. He went cautiously, halting often to listen, to watch the blank windows of the house. The moon smiled down on him, picking him out from amidst the rose-trees, giving him a shadow deeper, more solid, than theirs. And thus he came to the lawn between the garden and the house. And there, had it not been for a window that stood boldly open to the summer night, his adventure might have ended. But this window stood open. . . .

"Peter, the Gentleman Burglar," Peter whispered to his shadow, peering in at the window. Before him was a dim kitchen where the moon was captured and distorted in shining dish-covers, a kitchen from which a cat looked up at him with eyes of green flame, and purred.

"Pussie, poor Pussie!" said Peter sibilantly, rubbing fingers and thumb together. The cat purred again, and came silently towards him.

"Good job for me you're not a dog, Pussie," Peter whispered, slipping in through the window. He halted for an instant to stroke the cat, then felt his way to the door. It was open, but not sufficiently wide to admit of the passage of his large body; and when he pushed it, tentatively, it squealed.

Peter listened, but the house was very still.

"Nervy, Peter! Coming, Pussie?"

He went through a little narrow hall, up steep steps, six of them, into a long passage.

"To the dining-room," Peter thought, following it. It led him into a hall where suits of armour gleamed dully, where he tripped over a rug and sat down with a bump that almost jarred the teeth from his head.

Peter, rubbing himself, wondered how anyone could sleep through such a commotion. Possibly, he reasoned, when an interval of anxious listening had assured him that nobody was roused, the bump had seemed worse to him than in reality it had been. That seemed very probable. As he sat there, swearing internally, the cat expressed sympathy by rubbing herself against his knee.

"On, Peter, on!" said Peter encouragingly, climbing the wide stairs, halting a moment when one creaked. "This sort of thing is bad for the nerves, Pussie."

He reached, at length, a broad landing from which several corridors radiated. The stairs turned upon itself here, branched into two, and went up again. Peter thought none of the corridors looked very promising, and followed the stairs. They led him to another landing, to still more corridors. There was a window at the end of one of these, and on the floor a pool of moonlight. And in the pool of moonlight was something white. . . .

"The ghost of the manor," said Peter, feeling as if icy water was being poured down his back, watching that small white figure walking so quietly towards him. The hairs on the back of his neck began to rise. . . .

The little figure reached him, passed, went on down the stairs. It was the child Peter had seen in the garden, dressed now in a nightshirt, obviously and soundly asleep. Peter, walking lightly as a cat, went down the stairs level with it, his hands very ready should the little feet stumble. But the child went on steadily, unhesitatingly, down past the first landing, along the passage and down

the steps to the kitchen, to the door that led into the garden. A small hand went up, gripped the latch, lifted it; the door swung open. Peter and the child went out into the garden.

"This," said Peter under his breath, but very earnestly, "is the unadulterated devil!" He knew that to wake a somnambulist is to risk inflicting a grave shock.

The child went on, down the broad path to the boat-house, into the boat-house through a door that stood ajar. Peter swore at the darkness there, and swore again as he barked his shin against something invisible but undeniably solid. He heard a latch raised, saw a door open into an oblong of light, followed the child through to the landing-stage that thrust out into the golden river. And the child was walking on when Peter took him by the hand, very gently, and turned him. . . . And still he slept, while Peter led him back through the boat-house, through the garden, up the stairs. In the corridor where was the pool of moonlight Peter relinquished his charge, and the baby went on through an open door into a room where a woman snored gently.

"This is no place for a young, unmarried man," said Peter to the cat. "Come along, Pussie."

He turned, and stepped heavily on the cat's tail.

"Confound you!" said the cat, or something to that effect, very loudly.

"That's torn it!" said Peter, getting off the mark with greater celerity than he had ever achieved in his College hundred-yards' sprint. "This is a good place to be out of, Peter my boy."

As he went down the stairs four at a time the quiet of the house was stirred by noises, indefinite rustlings, drowsy voices. Peter didn't mind. He was now well into his stride, coming down the stairs like an aeroplane swooping. He was approaching the first landing when a door burst open and a large man in pyjamas came out.

"What the devil?" said the large man aggrievedly, as one who has been awakened from sound slumber. He placed himself in Peter's way, fists up, an Englishman guarding his castle. "Stop, confound you!"

"Stop me," said Peter invitingly, swinging for the large man's jaw. It was a hasty swing, delivered from a poor stance; but Peter had done notable things as an amateur heavy-weight, and his swings had a knack of connecting with their intended destination. This one did, and the large man

grunted and fell against the wall, taking no further interest in the proceedings.

Peter didn't wait to see him recover. He went on down the stairs, turned quickly in the hall by swinging around the banisters, shot along the passage to the kitchen, took the half-dozen steps in his stride, reached the lawn—there to be confronted by another large man, fully dressed, placidly smoking a pipe.

"Say!" said the large man, around the stem of the pipe. "Say, wait a minute!"

Peter, with his right, flicked the pipe from the large man's mouth, then treated him to a straight left that crumpled him up on the lawn. That was very satisfactory, though Peter was sorry he hadn't time to stop and be polite. The moon, as he took a running dive in the river, smiled approvingly.

Peter went across the river without any thought for the noise he made. A little noise here or there was of no consequence when lights were springing up in the house and voices were shouting questions and answers. He splashed through the sedges on the opposite bank, glanced back, grinned to see and hear the tumult he had caused and, somewhat reluctantly, sought the cover of the woods. He ran the half-mile or so to his tent at a very creditable speed.

When he reached the open, there was a slender figure crossing the little beach before his tent. There, in the pale gold of the moonlight, Peter saw it was the figure of a girl in a bathing-costume. She threw a quick glance over one shoulder at him, then dived cleanly into the placid river.

"This will bear investigation," said Peter, crossing the open space at his best speed. He went in with a dive that took him from the bank a good five yards, shook the water from his eyes, and began to "crawl." But his clothes hampered him, and the girl increased her lead. When Peter was but half-way across she climbed out, was swallowed by the darkness under the trees. Peter, knowing it useless to follow, turned and swam back.

"Some night!" he said, feeling about for matches. He found them, struck one. "Well, I'm jiggered!"

There on his pillow was a rosebud, blood-red, exquisite. He took it up, smelt it, examined it. It seemed an ordinary enough rosebud, and he put it into a cup of water. It wound itself through his dreams that night.

The sun was well up when he awoke. He yawned, stretched lazily, slipping out of his pyjamas and into his bathing-dress.

It was wet and uncomfortable, and he swore as he opened the flap of the tent. And there, sitting on the pebbly beach, was a policeman, a stout, jolly-looking policeman, but indisputably a policeman. And Peter's was a very guilty conscience.

"Mornin', sir," said the policeman affably. "Didn't like to waken you, so I just waited."

"Good morning," said Peter. "That was very kind of you. And what can I do for you?"

He was afraid, as he asked that, that the man in blue would make some nasty answer about taking a little walk with him; but these fears were groundless. The policeman, shifting a little, spat. Peter didn't like to see his bath thus defiled, but he didn't say anything.

"It's this way," said the policeman. "Last night, up at Warrender House"—he jerked a massive thumb in the direction of the big grey house—"some chap seems to have broken in to steal."

"Bless my soul!" said Peter incredulously. "Not a burglar?"

"A burglar," nodded the policeman, well satisfied with the effect he had created. "But he didn't take nothin'."

"No?" said Peter.

"No," said the policeman, "he didn't take nothin'. It so happens that Mr. Warrender has an American stayin' with him for the summer, along with other people, and this American, bein' a writer, and not like reasonable people, was havin' a quiet pipe to himself in the garden at about one in the mornin' when he sees a chap comin' in over the wall. Well, he sits nice and tight, and the fellow goes into the house through an open window. This here American has a revolver on him, and he's waitin' for the fellow to come out with the swag, so to speak. But instead of comin' out with the swag, this burglar chap comes out with Master Robbie, Mr. Warrender's boy, who's walkin' in his sleep. He makes a habit of it, and there's a nurse has to sleep with him. Well, she wasn't mindin' her job last night, and it seems that Robbie goes for a stroll, meets the burglar without knowin' it, and the burglar, seein' what's wrong, follows to see no harm comes to him. The American sees Robbie and the burglar walkin' down the garden together, and knows what's wrong, and doesn't make a sound. Robbie goes out on the landin'-stage, then the burglar gets him by the hand and leads him into the house. Well, after that somethin' happens to wake the house, and Mr. Warrender comes out

to see what's doin'. He meets the burglar, and the burglar knocks him out, clean as a whistle, as Mr. Warrender, bein' an old boxin' man himself, is the first to admit. Then the burglar meets this here American, and knocks *him* out, too. Then he gets clean away."

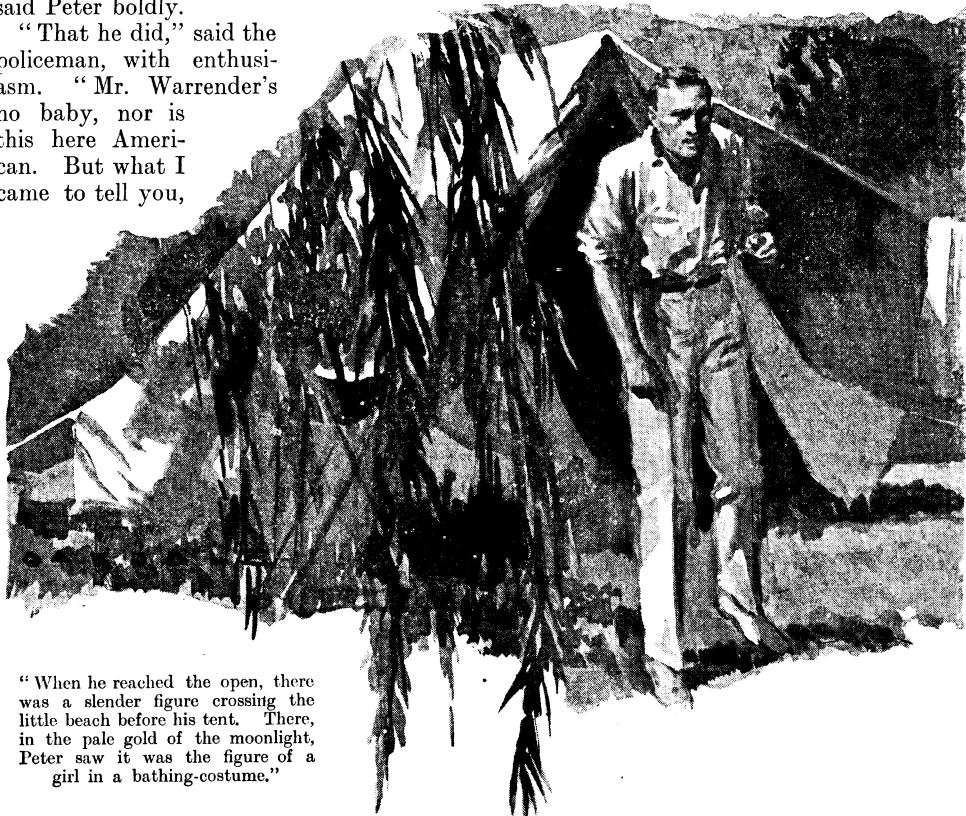
"And he deserved it," said Peter boldly.

"That he did," said the policeman, with enthusiasm. "Mr. Warrender's no baby, nor is this here American. But what I came to tell you,

then landed, opened it out, and read the same appeal as before. But here, at the end, were two more legible words. "Try again."

"Try again?" said Peter. "You bet your boots I will, whoever you are!"

Try again he did that night, a little earlier, leaving his tent just as the moon was coming .



"When he reached the open, there was a slender figure crossing the little beach before his tent. There, in the pale gold of the moonlight, Peter saw it was the figure of a girl in a bathing-costume."

sir, was to keep an eye open for this chap. Not that he's to be pinched, but Mr. Warrender wants to give him a reward for what he did for Robbie. Decent, I call that. And you'd better keep an eye open to see he don't try for any of your stuff, too."

"I'll watch him," said Peter grimly.

"And I think you *could*, too, sir," said the policeman, admiring Peter's muscles. "You're well made, sir, if I may say so."

"Ah-ha!" said Peter, tapping him playfully on the chest. "Thanks very much for the tip, officer. Now you'll excuse me, won't you, while I have my swim?"

Not that Peter was so terribly impatient for his swim; but there, floating lightly past on the bosom of the river, was a little boat of white paper. Peter retrieved it, swam about until the policeman was out of sight,

up over the trees. He was determined to be more cautious about it, now, remembering the American with the revolver. Peter was of the opinion that Americans shouldn't be trusted with revolvers; they were too eager to use them. But he was ready to back his fists against any revolver ever made.

He didn't jump on to the top of the side wall, this time, but climbed the end wall slowly, an inch at a time, until his eyes came above the level of the stones. He was very careful about it, because the river was only a few feet behind him, down a steep bank.

There seemed to be no movement in the garden, and after a few minutes he pulled himself higher, slid over the top, and for the second time was about to invade the garden when, directly beneath, something said "Grrrrr!"

"Grrrrr yourself," said Peter, justifiably annoyed, scrambling back to a safer position. Down there, looking up at him with a really malignant expression, was a large dog with teeth that gleamed white in the moonlight.

"Grrrrrrr!" said the dog again, more forcibly.

"Good old boy!" said Peter, clicking his

The good doggie, judging him within reach, snapped. Peter flicked his hand away just in time. The dog, grinning, waited for more.

"Well," said Peter, "it's on your own head, old pal."

He leaned down swiftly, caught the dog by the collar, used every muscle in his body in a swing that brought the kicking animal over the wall and ten good yards into the river. It went deep, and came up with all the fight gone from it. Peter, grinning, dropped into the garden.

He was moving stealthily towards the house when he heard voices. One was deep, chuckling, American, the other clear and girlish. It



"She threw a quick glance over one shoulder at him, then dived cleanly into the placid river."

fingers. "There, good doggie! . . . get down to blazes, you sanguinary hell-hound!"

The dog remained as it was, fore-paws against the wall, white teeth very prominent. Then treachery gleamed in its eyes, and its tail began to wag.

"Which end am I to believe?" said Peter, leaning down a little, one leg well hooked over the wall. "There, good doggie!"

was this second that made Peter catch his breath suddenly, and crouch even deeper into the shadow of the hedge.

"You think he'll come?" said the man.

"I'm sure of it," said the girl. "Would he strike you as the sort of chap to stick at trifles?"

"Wal, I guess not!" the American chuckled. "He's sure some little hustler when he gets going. But where's that blamed dawg?"

"He must be somewhere," said the girl logically, and they went on.

Peter followed. He followed with all the stealth of a Red Indian of unlovable character trailing a pale-face against whom he has a grouch. But he couldn't follow them across the open space to which they presently came. He squatted down among the rose-trees, and watched the girl and the American

settle themselves on a seat well hidden by converging hedges. Doubtless, he thought, that was where the American had been the previous night. And they sat there for a long, long time, very quiet.

"Somehow," said the American at length, "I don't think this burglar of yours is coming, Aileen."

"It doesn't look like it," the girl admitted, with a sigh. "I think I'll have a swim."

She stood up, and Peter saw that she wore only a coat over her bathing-dress. She walked into the boat-house, the American following, and Peter heard the door open. Then a laugh, a slight splash, the sound of swimming.

"Be careful!" the American called.

"I'm . . ." came the clear voice, then a little bubbling cry. "Help!"

Peter kicked off his shoes and crossed the open space in three jumps. As he reached the boat-house he threw off his coat; on the landing-stage he abandoned his trousers. Then, in silken bathing-costume, he dived flatly towards that ominous ring of foam in midstream.

The girl came up as he began to slice through the water, glanced towards him and, her head low in the water, her arms moving smoothly, made for the opposite bank. From sheer astonishment Peter almost sank. But he had seen her smile in the golden moonlight, and with every ounce of strength in him he followed. She scrambled up the bank only a few yards ahead of him. Peter splashed through the osiers. . . .

"Aileen!" he called softly.

The woods were very still, the shadows beneath the trees very deep. But Peter stilled his breathing to listen, and heard on his right the softest of whispering breaths . . . saw there a slender figure, real in unsubstantial shadows, crouched against the bole of a tree. He went towards her quickly; she jumped to her feet and ran.

Peter caught her in a very short distance. She struggled a little, just enough to let him

see she didn't want to struggle at all, then lay passive in his arms.

"Hello, Peter," she said, smiling up at him.

"Hello, Aileen," he said, kissing her. "What a little rascal you are!"

She chuckled.

"A dear little rascal," said Peter, kissing her again. "You didn't really believe I flirted with that Effingham girl, did you?"

"No," said Aileen. "But you annoyed me by assuming I did. Then you must go off in a huff, to lead the simple life. Of course, I knew you'd come here."

"And you followed me," said Peter, "and sent little appeals for help down the river?"

"That was Mr. Johnson's idea," said Aileen, blushing. "The American humorist, you know."

"I gave him something to be humorous about," said Peter. "And whose was the idea of putting a rosebud on my pillow?"

Aileen said nothing.

"And whose," said Peter, "was the idea of putting a ferocious dog into the garden? This American humorist's?"

"No, Mr. Warrender's," said Aileen. "He didn't know, you see."

"And whose," said Peter, "was the idea of yelling for help when you were perfectly safe?"

"Mr. Johnson's," said Aileen. "He said that'd bring you out if you were anywhere near."

"I see," said Peter. "Am I from all this to conclude that you wanted me again, Aileen, but didn't want me to know it?"

Aileen nodded, blushing.

"Very badly?" said Peter.

"Terribly, Peter."

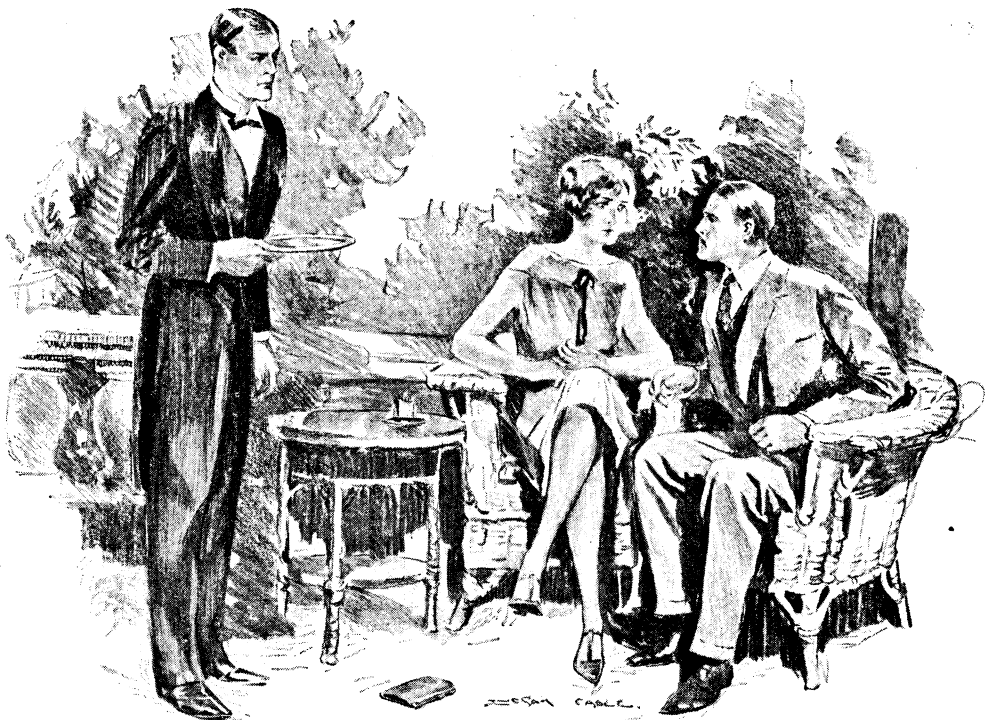
"When'll we get married, Aileen?"

Aileen looked up at the moon. It was a moon such as is seldom seen, big and round and red as a Dutch cheese, and, as these moons do, it smiled down at her.

"When, Aileen?"

"Whenever you like, Peter," said Aileen.





"'Rodney,' said Estelle, 'leave that case where it is.' She turned to her cousin. 'Kindly beg my butler's pardon for behaving like a first-class cad.'"

ST. JEAMES

By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "Berry and Co.," "The Stolen March," "Jonah and Co.," "Blind Corner," "And Five Were Foolish," etc., etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LINDSAY CABLE

JOHN RODNEY SHERE was old for his age.

His parents had died whilst he was yet at school, and at fifteen he had become the ward of an old attorney who proceeded to care for the boy according to his lights. These were dry as dust. From that time on, John Rodney Shere was administered, as an estate. He was visited six times a year: he was inspected: he was reported upon: he was maintained: he was improved. At the end of each term he stayed with his guardian for one week—dismal periods, during which old Matthew Fennel suffered more than his ward. The former was desperately anxious to do the right thing by

the boy—and perfectly certain that he was doing the wrong. As a matter of hard fact, he did very well: but he knew no more of children than he knew of lug-worms, and he was too old to learn.

No man knew better than the lawyer how to treat his superiors, his equals and those below him in estate: but everyone he met went into one of those compartments, and his ward was no exception to the rule. At the little old house in Curzon Street Rodney was treated as his guardian's compeer. The two dined in state every evening and retired at half-past ten. In the mornings, under escort, Rodney walked in the Park and rode in the Row: in the after-

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noons he was taken to the tailor, the boot-maker, the Zoological Gardens or the Stores. At the end of the week he was dispatched to a Devonshire farm.

It was at the long, low homestead that the boy passed his happiest days. The farmer had been the bailiff of a great land-owner and knew how to keep 'the young gentleman' happy and well. His dame was the kindest of women and the best of farmers' wives. But there were no children at the farm.

All things considered, it is not surprising that at twenty-three John Rodney Shere was old for his age.

It was the tenth of July, and Rodney had just left Oxford for the last time.

His guardian was dead: he was absolute master of six hundred pounds a year: he was staying at his Club in St. James's, and he had no plans at all.

This night there was a dance in Arlington Street, to which Rodney had been bidden by the hostess, whose son he knew. He went reluctantly. He could not dance and was not at his ease with women he did not know. But he had been asked of civility, and of civility he must go. And within the week he must call. Rodney was nothing at all, if not correct.

Behind this precise outlook a keen sense of humour stood him in excellent stead. It was, indeed, the very salt of his life. Few people suspected this. All saw a young man of more than average height, very well built and looking remarkably fit, a young man with thick black hair, grey eyes and an aquiline nose, a young man, curiously solemn, wearing the gravity of a Justice upon his Bench. Only a very few saw the laughter which inhabited his eyes: this was seldom rampant, but it was always there.

Rodney had been at the dance for half an hour, had spoken with no one but his hostess and was wondering how soon he could in decency withdraw, when the son of the house appeared, dragging a girl by the wrist.

"Let me introduce Mr. Shere—Miss Bearskin, commonly called 'Owdareyou'. He'll swear he can't dance, but I've seen him: but, if you don't fit, you can always muck in with the thirsties and tell one another your sins."

The next moment he was gone.

"How d'ye do," said Rodney.

"D'you really mean you can't dance?" said Miss Bearskin.

"I'll convince you—if you like," said Rodney.

They pushed off into the stream. . . .

After the longest minute that Rodney had ever known—

"No, you can't dance," said Miss Bearskin. "What can you do?"

"I can drink," said Rodney.

Miss Bearskin regarded him.

"You don't look as if you could," she said. "Anything else?"

"I can answer questions," said Rodney.

"I shall call you 'Truthful Joseph'," said Miss Bearskin. "And now let's go and coal."

She led the way to a room in which supper was being eaten and drinks were being drunk.

"What may I get you?" said Rodney.

"Some *foie gras*, a roll, some butter and some champagne."

The champagne was easy, but it was fully two minutes before the requisite viands came Rodney's way.

With a plate in each hand, he struggled back to the corner in which he had left Miss Bearskin sipping champagne.

The lady's glass was empty, and the lady was gone.

Rodney was rather relieved, and, when he was sure that she was not to be seen, rid himself of the plates and returned to the ball-room.

He was, indeed, upon the edge of approaching his hostess, when he observed Miss de Swete. And when a man observed Miss de Swete for the first time, he was apt, as the saying is, to lose his place.

Estelle de Swete was probably one of the most beautiful women alive. She was certainly one of the proudest. As an only child, she had been spoiled to death: and at seventeen she had been soured. Till then she had had everything that money can buy: then her father had broken his neck in the hunting-field, and the Jews, of whom no one had dreamed, had asked to be paid. The double shock killed her mother within the month, and, instead of emerging to rule a London Season, Estelle had seen her home sold, her wardrobe fought for by dressmakers who believed that two birds in the hand are worth more than one in the bush, and the footman she had always detested, smoking in her boudoir and pointing out, with all the irrelevance of a drunken revolutionary, that he was her creditor to the extent of eighteen pounds.

Estelle had been sent to her grandfather

to share with him an aged, Somersetshire mansion and, when her father's debts had been paid, almost exactly one thousand pounds a year.

Her visits to Town were rare. But, when she came, it was not to hide her light. She could have gone everywhere and always went where she could. People should see for themselves that she did not care. That her hackles were always up is not surprising. She was deadly proud, and Fate had hit this proud girl between the eyes. Very well. People should see. . . .

So it happened that, wearing a simple frock, without a jewel upon her body, Estelle danced that hot night at Arlington Street with such as offered themselves and when she had no partner, stood, looking scornfully about her, with her back to the wall.

She was standing so, when Rodney saw her for the first time.

As a Lawrence might stand out of a bevy of Impressionists, so Estelle de Swete, grand-daughter of the tenth baronet, stood for Rodney out of that glittering throng. Her beautiful, imperious countenance, the infinite dignity of her carriage, the scorn of her magnificent eyes engraved themselves upon his brain. People pushed past him, bumped into him, trod upon him, but he took no notice at all. He had no eyes or mind for anything but the girl. He was obsessed, rapt. . . .

Suddenly her eyes met his across the breadth of the floor. For an instant they looked each other full in the face: then a man addressed her, and she turned away. The man, a complacent satyr, with an unpleasant neck, was proposing himself for a dance. Estelle looked him up and down. Then she set a hand on his shoulder, and they began to move.

Rodney sought his young host, but the latter was not to be found. When he returned from the search, the lady had disappeared. He began to seek her exhaustively. . . .

At last he came to a balcony, overlooking the park. There were no lights here, and at first the place seemed empty: then his diligent eyes caught the white of a frock. Quietly he moved towards it and presently slid into a chair.

Suddenly a girl's voice flashed.

"Do you mind letting me pass?"

The reply was inaudible.

"You intolerable outsider," said Estelle.

"Because, thanks to the War, you are admitted to this house, can you see no

difference between yourself and me? At a dance like this the food and the band are hired, but not the women. Be good enough to let me pass."

"Not after that," said the man.

Rodney took him by the seat of his trousers and his unpleasant neck, swung him over the low balustrade and let him fall ten feet into a flower-bed which was wet.

He stood up to find Estelle staring.

A flurry of oaths from the garden was succeeded by the crunch of gravel and a further explosion of wrath. As the steps died away—

"I could have dealt with him," said the girl.

"I'm sure of that," said Rodney politely enough.

"Then, why did you interfere?"

"To spare you, I suppose."

"I see. A damsel in distress. Do I know you?"

"No," said Rodney.

"If I did, you'd know that I'm not the clinging sort. And in any event these aren't the Middle Ages. However, I suppose you meant well."

"I'd do it again," said Rodney cheerfully.

For a moment Miss de Swete was bereft of speech. Such a reception of her patronage was very nearly unique.

At length—

"What on earth do you mean?" she said.

"That next time anyone pesters you I only hope I shall be there."

"Why?"

The man hesitated. He could see her form, but not the expression of her face. Of him she could see no more, for his back was towards the window from which a faint glow came.

"Why, please?" repeated Estelle, tapping the stone with her foot.

"Because I love you," said Rodney.

There was a moment's silence.

Then the girl drew a deep breath.

"Insolence," she said, and struck him full on the ear.

Rodney swore under his breath: then he began to laugh. An opponent's loss of temper always steadied his own.

"I wish you were in trousers," he said.

"Why?"

"Because then I should drop you into the flower-bed."

"I see. Do you still—love me?"

She made the sneer very broad.

"Yes," said Rodney. "But, if you strike

me again, I shall drop you into the flower-bed, trousers or no."

Estelle struck him again.

In a flash he had her by the arms and had swung her up and over the balustrade. For a moment he held her so. Then he kissed her lightly, lowered her as far as he could and let her go.

As she met the wet earth, Estelle employed a most appropriate word . . .

After assuring himself that the shaft of light illumining the garden came from an open door, Rodney returned to the ball-room and bade his hostess 'good-bye'.

"I've enjoyed myself immensely," he said.

This was perfectly true.

Then he found the son of the house and asked him the name of the girl who looked so proud.

"Oh, you mean Estelle," said the latter. "Estelle de Swete. The tenth baronette. She's a corker. She's up on one of her raids. Periodically erupts from Somerset, does more damage and makes more enemies in a week than a rogue elephant does in a lifetime and then disappears. Whatever you do, don't touch her. She's lovely to look at, but she's a man-eater."

"Is she though?" said Rodney.

Ten minutes later he was back at his Club.

He had, I think, done quite well, but he had made one mistake. He left the balcony too soon. If he had waited, after hearing Estelle's healthy exclamation, he would have heard something which would have



"Estelle looked down from the ladder on which she was perched. 'Tell me,' she said quietly. 'Why are you doing this?' 'For my living, madam.'"

done his heart still more good.

He would have heard the lady fall into silvery laughter.

* * * *

Man but proposes. . . .

Rodney awoke the next morning, determined to marry Estelle within the year: and, being old for his age, he did not rush at the business, but decided to arm himself before he made the assault.

He had no idea at all that Estelle de Swete was poor. He assumed, perhaps naturally, that

avoid bankruptcy for nearly six months, of their business and other relations there is little of interest to be said. It had been done before.

Suffice it that one



“ ‘There are plenty of people who would give you two hundred a year.’ ‘I’m very happy here, madam.’ ‘Don’t call me “madam”.’ ”

she was reasonably rich. That being so, his income must be increased. Must. . . . The parable of the talents pointed an obvious path.

A man he had known at Oxford was now ‘in the City’, a stockbroker—or something. Rodney visited his office, to find that his friend had taken some post in the Argentine. The head of the firm, however, received him charmingly.

Except that Rodney’s resolve to treble his fortune enabled the head of the firm to

dull December day John Rodney Shere, gentleman, found himself with not very many clothes, twenty thousand shares which were entirely valueless and thirty-two pounds in the world.

Then at last he did what he should have done five months before. He set out for Somerset.

Now whether he did so in the hope of marrying Estelle or merely of seeing her again, or just of looking upon her home, I cannot tell: and I very much doubt if

Rodney knew himself. The lady attracted him : and, after resisting his instinct for five disastrous months, he let it have its way.

The village of Cockcrow is distant from London one hundred and thirty-five miles.

Rodney walked there, sleeping at farms by the way and earning his lodging and board. He was soon satisfied that, if work was scarce in the country, that was the labourer's fault. Before he had come to Yeovil, he had had five several offers of a permanent job. This encouraged him greatly, and when, at eight o'clock of a brilliant morning, the potman of *The Maiden* at Cockcrow told him the way to Feathers and added, that unless he was mistaken, the farm two miles farther on was short of a cowman, he could have thrown up his hat.

A job two miles from Estelle. . . .

A de Swete had inhabited Feathers for more than four hundred years. Rodney knew this. Yet the idea of the new cowman at Bluecoat Farm raising his eyes to the grand-daughter of the tenth baronet did not seem to him in the least preposterous.

Which shows that the last five months had had one healthy effect. He was no longer quite so old for his age.

The three miles to Feathers were lovely, for they were three English country miles and there was a hoar frost.

The white magic of the hedgerows, the bewildering tracery of the woods, the exquisite filigree of wayside trees made up a glowing canticle : the road rang under the feet—a jolly sound : free of his swaddling mists, the sun, a merry monarch, rejoiced a gay, blue sky : a sober flight of rooks cawed and swung in the air : in the distance, a hazy Mendip lifted a sleepy head : and, presently, in the immediate foreground, a grey, old gate-house was framing two wrought-iron gates with the peculiar dignity of Henry Tudor.

The gates were shut, but their bars could not hide the venerable quire of elms, at the end of which Rodney could see a gable of mellow stone.

The gate-house was untenanted : one of its panes was broken and the casement had been boarded up : the gates had need of attention—urgent need : in the avenue weeds were sprouting. To go farther afield, an oak had fallen in the park ; this had been struck down in leaf and still lay as it had fallen, with its broken roots in the air : and ten feet of the park's wall had bulged, and the coping had slipped.

Rodney's stare slid slowly into a frown.

He walked on slowly in the hope of seeing the house, but after a quarter of a mile he began to retrace his steps.

As he approached the gate-house, voices came to his ears—a woman's shrill voice, raised in anger, and the rumbling agreement of a man.

Wondering what was afoot, Rodney came abreast of the gates.

A procession was descending the avenue.

First came the man and woman whose voices Rodney had heard. They were of middle age and were laden with all manner of traps—brown-paper parcels and bundles, an umbrella and cheap leather bags. Behind, astride of an iron-grey horse, came Miss de Swete. She was hatless, but gloved, and was wearing a soft leather jumper above her breeches and boots. Her lovely dark brown hair rendered the sunshine. Her beautiful face was like a mask.

"Nigger slaves," shrilled the woman. "That's wot you want. Decen' respectable bodies is no good to you."

"That's right," affirmed the man.

"Our souls is our own," said the woman, "an' nobody don't grind us. You talk about 'bad service'. Why, you can't afford service at all. You ought to be in a notice an' boardin' at Golder's Green. Airs an' graces don' go with a ruing like this. Silver-gilt on the table, an' the cheese straws you 'ad for supper warmed up for lunch."

"Dressin' for dinner," said the man, "an' nothin' to drink."

He set down the bags he was bearing and started to open the gates. These resisted his bungling, so Rodney stepped forward and quietly swung one of them back.

The three stared at him.

Rodney took no notice, but stood with his back to the gate, plainly expecting the servants to go their way.

The woman forced out a laugh.

"We're goin' all right," she said. "You needn't look like that. Anybody'd think we was rioters. Follerin' us on 'orseback, an' another one 'oldin' the gate. Come on, Badger."

They passed out into the road, and Rodney closed the gate.

Then he turned to Estelle and spoke humbly enough.

"I'm looking for a place as a servant. If I am right, you need one. I haven't had much experience, but I can very soon learn."

Coldly Miss de Swete regarded him.

"You heard what they said—about the place?"

Rodney nodded.

"I don't value their opinion very much."

"What can you do?" said Estelle.

"Most things," said Rodney boldly.

"What was that man?"

"He called himself a 'working butler'."

"I can beat him at that."

"You won't stay if you can't," said Estelle. "What wages do you ask?"

Rodney hesitated. Then—

"Thirty-six pounds a year," he said.

"I'll pay you forty," said Estelle.

"Thank you," said Rodney. And then, "Shall I come at once? I mean I can send for my clothes."

The girl raised her eyebrows.

"If you like," she said. "What do you call yourself?"

"My name is Rodney—madam."

"Do you mean you want to start now?"

"At this moment, madam."

"Very well," said Estelle slowly. She turned her horse. "Follow me."

She rode back up the avenue, as she had come.

Her new 'working butler' followed obediently.

* * * * *

Two months had gone by, and life at Feathers was more easy than it had been for years. The new 'working butler' had become the pillar of the house.

Sir Richard, aged eighty-four and, though he refused to admit it, now totally blind, had come to cling to Rodney with the faith of a child. He had not known such attention, since his body-servant, Filmer, had died twenty years before. And Rodney was better than Filmer had ever been. But that was nothing. Rodney had taken control of the establishment. I suppose he had the gift of organisation. Be that as it may, he set the house in order and so maintained it. He was butler, footman, valet, but he was steward, too. He found enough silver in use for a party of thirty guests. At his respectful suggestion five-sixths of it was listed and presently lodged at the Bank. He found twenty-five rooms open when ten would have been enough. He suggested respectfully that fifteen of these should be closed and, with the required permission, saw to the matter himself. He sought and procured a housemaid who was willing to work. He sold the fallen timber, and the gardener and he, together, rebuilt the tumbling wall.

The old groom and cook—man and wife

—revered him: the housemaid thought he was a god: Sir Richard said loudly and often that he was worth his weight in gold, and Estelle felt curiously ill at ease.

This stray, this broken gentleman was shouldering her burdens, her world. More. He was carrying her and her grandfather, the very fortunes of her house. But for his coming, life at Feathers must have come to a sordid end. Instead, it had been revived—given a fine, new lease. She was able to live and move as a lady should. Her shoes were beautifully cleaned, the rooms were in perfect order, the silver was always brilliant, the meals were admirably served. The inevitable 'trivial round' had been effaced. The common and unclean spectre had slunk away. More—much more. Visitors saw how things ought to be done. Her pride had been served—at a cost of forty pounds a year.

She never gave Rodney an order, seldom made him a request. Of respect and self-respect she spared him as much as she could.

One wet February day she went further.

The shelves of the stately library were to be unloaded and cleaned. At least, Rodney had advised it, and Rodney was always right.

"I will help you," said Estelle.

Rodney hesitated. Then—

"I'm afraid it will be rather dirty work, madam."

"I will help you," said Estelle. "When do you want to begin?"

"After luncheon, madam."

"Very well."

Three o'clock found them at work.

For an hour they laboured in silence. Then came the pulse of an engine, and the front-door bell was rung.

Rodney plunged his hands into a pail. Then he whipped off his apron and slid into his coat.

"You are not at home, madam?"

"No."

The next moment he was gone.

He returned with three cards upon a salver.

When his mistress had inspected them, he took them away.

A moment later he was again in his apron, piling the books.

Estelle looked down from the ladder on which she was perched.

"Tell me," she said quietly. "Why are you doing this?"

"For my living, madam."

"There are plenty of people who would give you two hundred a year."

"I'm very happy here, madam."

"Don't call me 'madam'. It's indecent. You know it is."

"I——"

"Call me 'Estelle'."

Rodney set a hand on a pillar and stared on the floor.

"How can I?" he said.

"You're my equal."

"I'm your butler."

"Then get me a cigarette."

Rodney did so without a word.

"Now take one yourself."

Rodney threw in his hand and began to laugh.

For a moment they smoked in silence.

"Now call me 'Estelle'."

"All right—Estelle."

"That's better," said Miss de Swete.

"Why?" said Rodney.

"I must give something," said the girl.

"On March the first I shall pay you three pounds odd. If it was three thousand, it wouldn't discharge our debt. That won't go into money, as you very well know."

"There is no debt," said Rodney.

"Of course there is. And each time you call me 'madam' up goes the score."

"You've got it all wrong," said Rodney. "You——"

"I haven't. You must understand. Try to put yourself in my place. Supposing you had been beaten—had your back to the wall, and the wall had been giving way. No system, no servants, no money, and Feathers on its very last legs. And then I'd blown in and pulled the whole show round. And licked your boots and 'sirred' you from morning to night."

"I've never licked your boots," said Rodney.

"And supposing you couldn't sack me"—Rodney looked up sharply—"and—and end it all."

"I can't suppose that," said Rodney.

Coldly Estelle regarded him.

"In view of my grandfather's state, how can I send you away?"

Rodney looked her full in the eyes.

"In view of your grandfather's state, how can I go?"

Under his steady gaze the blood came into her face.

Abruptly she rose to her feet.

"We'd better get on," she said shortly.

They laboured till five in silence and stopped for the day.

Three days later the last books were going back.

Estelle was up on the ladder and Rodney was giving the volumes into her little hands. Not since that first afternoon had they spoken at all.

Estelle sat down on the ladder and folded her hands in her lap.

"I'm a rotten bad debtor," she said. "I set out to pay and then I climb deeper in. I wouldn't send you away for a thousand a year. You're indispensable."

"To your grandfather."

"To Feathers—to us."

"That's much too handsome," said Rodney.

"It's true. If you were to say you were going, I'd go on my knees to you to stay."

"That'll do," said Rodney. "You've paid your debt."

Estelle shook her lovely head.

"That's so much nonsense," she said.

"And now, please, listen. I'm going to help you every day. We'll clean the silver, or dust, or do something that has to be done. And while we're at work, I shall be plain Estelle."

"But——"

The girl held up a small hand.

"That is an order," she said. "If you don't like it you can go. My grandfather's never seen you, or we shouldn't have come to this. He would have interfered ages ago. You wait upon us hand and foot, when you should be at table yourself. Well, that's all right in a way, so long as it's perfectly clear that we're playing a game. If not, it becomes indecent. You remember the Saturnalia? When once a year, at Christmas, the Romans served their slaves? Well, that would have been indecent, if it hadn't been perfectly clear that it was only a game."

John Rodney Shere swallowed.

"This is different," he said. "We made a contract, you and I. I made it with my eyes open and I am perfectly content."

"But my eyes weren't open," said Estelle, "and I am not content."

Steadily Rodney regarded the lady he loved.

Sitting on the top of the ladder, her delicate fingers laced about a slim knee, her exquisite chin lowered, her big, brown eyes upon his, she had the unconscious glory of a beautiful child. The proud look was out of her face, which was very grave. Only the parted lips argued an eagerness as takes a man by the throat.

If Rodney had found her lovely as My Lady Disdain, he found this eager child peerless indeed. . . .

With a pounding heart, Rodney lowered his eyes.

A hand came to rest upon his shoulder.

"Please do as I say. You've taken away every bit of my self-respect. Won't you give me a chance to win some of it back?"

Rodney looked up quickly.

"All right—Estelle," he said gently.

The hand left his shoulder and was stretched down for his.

Rodney put it to his lips. . . .

"I meant you to shake it," said Estelle severely. "Did you think——"

"I didn't think at all," said Rodney.

For a moment his lady regarded him, chin in air.

Then she began to laugh.

"At least," she said, "no butler would have done that."

* * * * *

Spring was in, but the winter had done its work.

Sir Richard de Swete was failing. Take to his bed he would not, but his natural strength was constantly giving way. He would walk for awhile upon the terrace, to totter into the library and sleep like the dead. He would fall asleep at dinner, before the cloth had been drawn. His ascent and descent of the stairs became hazardous things. Estelle and Rodney had their hands very full. The latter, of course, was a very tower of strength: no servant could ever have taken the place he filled. The former's artless devotion quickened more hearts than one. The two became brother and sister, succouring the lord of their house.

The baronet's frailty bore heavily upon Shere. The sick man would dress twice a day, and Rodney dared not leave him to dress alone. After awhile he shaved him morning and night. His other work must have suffered but for Estelle. Together they cleaned the silver and kept the rooms. Together they pointed masonry and painted window-frames. They drifted into sharing the maintenance of their world.

Then one day came a letter which made Estelle knit her brows.

As she laid it down, she exclaimed.

Her grandfather, more sprightly than usual, put his white head on one side.

"What is it, little lady?"

"Cousin Frederick proposes himself for lunch."

The baronet frowned.

"I never liked Frederick," he said. "He was an untruthful child. The last time I saw him his manners left much to be desired."

"I hate him," said Estelle. "Shall I say we're going away?"

"No, no," said the baronet. "He is my sister's son. If he asks for lunch he must have it. What is he doing down here?"

"Except that he's going to Cornwall he doesn't say."

This was hardly surprising. The intelligence would have been ill received. Cousin Frederick had been summoned to appear at a Cornish Petty Sessional Court for 'driving dangerously' and 'failing to stop' after an accident. As the result of the accident, a donkey had had two legs broken and its owner, aged seventy-seven, lay between life and death.

What worried Estelle most of all was that Rodney would have to wait upon this detestable man.

She broke the news the next morning, whilst she was arranging the flowers.

"There's a rotten brute coming to lunch on Wednesday."

Rodney, cleaning the fire-dogs, sat back on his heels.

"Sorry," he said. "Perhaps he won't stay very long."

"He's certain to bring a chauffeur. George will look after him."

"I don't mind in the least, Estelle. It's——"

"I do. Like master, like man. George will look after the chauffeur and put him where he belongs."

"Right you are," said Rodney. "What will the other one drink?"

"Gin, whiskey and brandy—in that order. Vermuth with the first, soda with the second, and brandy with the third."

"The old school," said Rodney. "I see."

Estelle peered into a mirror and patted her hair.

"I may as well tell you," she said, "that he doesn't know how to behave."

"Are you afraid," said Rodney, "that I shall laugh?"

"Of course not." She returned to her flowers. "But he—he doesn't know how to treat servants, and—and—well, he's my cousin and I've seen him forget that other people's servants weren't his."

"Let him forget," said Rodney. "I shan't."

Estelle bent over her basket.

"Hark at St. Jeames," she said, addressing some daffodils.

Rodney swallowed.

"It was very sweet of you to warn me, Estelle."

"Don't be a fool," said the lady. "And, by the way, it's late in the day to discuss it, but don't you ever want some time off? I know you said you'd tell me when you did, and, after that, I forgot. But you've been here nearly five months and you've never had one afternoon."

Rodney shook his head.

"I don't want one," he said. "I'm—very happy."

With that, he went on with his work.

"Why are you happy?" said Estelle.

"I don't know. I just am. You're very good to me."

Estelle sat down in a chair and crossed her legs.

"Tell me, St. Jeames, where have I seen you before?"

Rodney straightened his back.

"At a dance," he said.

"At the Jermyns' last July?"

"That's right. I was looking at you, and you looked up."

"But we weren't introduced, St. Jeames?"

"Oh no," said Rodney. "Our eyes just happened to meet."

"Then how," said Estelle, "how is it I know your voice?"

Rodney felt rather faint.

"I—I can't imagine," he said, resuming his work.

There was a short silence.

"Nobody loved me that night," said Miss de Swete.

"What makes you think that?" said Rodney.

"I had a bad time. I wasn't popular."

"Rot," said Rodney.

"Well, you never even asked to be introduced."

"You disappeared," said Rodney. "I looked for you everywhere."

"Oh, St. Jeames!"

"I wanted to know you," said Rodney desperately.

"If you'd really wanted to know me, I think you'd have found me, St. Jeames."

Rodney rose to his feet.

"I tell you, you'd disappeared. I went all over the place."

"Who did you ask?" said Estelle.

"I didn't know your name."

"You could have described me."

Rodney passed to the door.

"I don't think anyone could do that—madam."

The next moment he was gone.

Wednesday came, and Cousin Frederick with it.

Rodney had taken his measure before he had taken his coat.

The man was bad. The best was good enough for him, but too good for anyone else: his instinct was to give offence: poverty was a cock-shy. These things were written in his face.

Rodney decided to go very carefully indeed.

Except that he did not go backward, he led the man to a bedroom, as though he were preceding a king. Thence he brought him to the drawing-room.

As he opened the door—

"See to my chauffeur," said Cousin Frederick.

"Very good, sir."

Luncheon passed off pretty well.

The guest did most of the talking, made two clumsy allusions to his uncle's infirmity and, conscious that his host could not see him, grimaced at Estelle after each. He also advised them to 'sell those chairs at Christie's and buy a cheap car'. Estelle's eyes had narrowed, but the baronet turned it off. Only when the fellow declared that Estelle was 'wasting her life in this one-horsed rut', did his uncle pull him up. "Be that as it may," he said firmly, "she is not wasting mine." Never at a loss, Cousin Frederick put his thumb to his nose and extended his fingers towards the blind man's face. Subduing the desire to kill, Rodney replenished his glass.

It was after luncheon, when Sir Richard had been led to the library and Estelle and her cousin were sitting upon the terrace, that the latter began to look Rodney up and down.

I suppose there was a natural antipathy between the two. Maybe he suspected that Rodney admired Estelle. Probably the perfectly obvious fact that the butler was as well-bred as he and about twice as presentable stuck in his ugly throat.

When Rodney came for the coffee-cups, the other stopped talking and followed him with his eyes. Rodney gave no manner of sign that he was aware of this attention. Estelle looked straight in front of her, white and cold.

"Get my cigars," said Cousin Frederick.

"Very good, sir," said Rodney.

When he returned with a cigar-case, a bright red spot was adorning each of his lady's cheeks.

Cousin Frederick took the cigar-case and threw it down upon the ground.

"Take that back," he said, "and do as you're told."

The case sprang open with the fall and disgorged a sheaf of cigarettes. The mistake, if Rodney had made one, was not his fault.

"Rodney," said Estelle, "leave that case where it is." She turned to her cousin. "Kindly beg my butler's pardon for behaving like a first-class cad."

Cousin Frederick appeared to have lost the power of speech.

"We are waiting," said Estelle grimly.

"Are you out of your mind?" said her cousin. "I gave the fellow an order——"

"Who are you to give orders here?"

"I requested the man," said Frederick, "to——"

"You did nothing of the sort. You ordered him to fetch your cigars. He brought your rotten cigar-case. Do you suggest it was his duty to look inside?"

"If you think——"

"I don't," said Estelle. "I know. Are you going to beg his pardon?"

"Certainly not. The man's behaviour——"

"Has been superb," said Estelle. "I admit I warned him. I told him what to expect. I told him that he would have to wait upon the most insufferable swine that ever stepped into this house. I told him what you would say and how you would act. I didn't tell him what you were fit for—I left him to see that for himself. And now I should fade away. Don't bother to wake my grandfather. I hate to deprive you of a chance of exploiting his lack of sight, but he always rests after lunch and he's not at all well." She turned to Rodney. "Rodney, send round the chauffeur and stay in the stable-yard."

"Very good, madam."

Rodney withdrew, but, fearing trouble, returned as soon as he could to the terrace-hall.

He was, however, some twenty seconds too late.

"I tell you he's ill," cried Estelle. "A shock——"

"You should have thought of that before. Uncle Richard!"

The baronet started violently, got to

his feet somehow and stood shaking from head to foot.

"What—what is it?" he stammered. "You were just saying . . ."

Estelle and Rodney, coming from opposite doors, reached him at the same time.

"You'd better dismiss your butler. If you weren't blind, you'd never have taken him on. He doesn't know his place. And, if I were you, I should get a companion for Estelle. Otherwise, one of these days, you'll find yourself with a grandson who's not in the book."

The baronet had stopped shaking. Now he drew himself up.

"Better be blind," he said, "than have an unclean sight. When I permitted you to come here, I assumed that you would remember that this was your mother's home and would control the instincts you seem to possess. It seems I was mistaken. I shall not repeat my mistake. And now take your things and go. People call earlier than they did, and I am not prepared to introduce you to my friends."

Cousin Frederick went.

As the door closed behind him, Sir Richard collapsed.

Called upon for an effort, the dying man had responded as only a thoroughbred can. But the strain was fatal. His old, tired system had broken down.

Rodney bore him upstairs and got him to bed. . . .

The doctor was downright.

"A stroke. It's a matter of hours or days—probably days. I don't think he'll speak again. He mustn't be left for an instant."

"I shall nurse him, of course," said Estelle.

"You can't do the twenty-four hours. By your leave, Miss de Swete, I'll get you a night-nurse from Wells. Would you like another opinion?"

"If you advise it."

"I don't. I'm dreadfully sorry, but I know that this is the end. His pulse alone . . ."

As much friend as doctor, he fetched the night-nurse himself, and at half-past eight that evening Rodney was standing as usual behind his mistress's chair.

Not until he had brought her coffee, did the latter open her mouth.

"It's a matter of days," she said.

"I'm most awfully sorry, Estelle."

"Sit down and smoke, please. I want to talk."

Rodney set down his salver and lighted a cigarette.

"Why do I rush in?" said the girl. "If I hadn't——"

"That's absurd, Estelle. Besides, if it comes to that, I was the cause of the row."

"I made it."

"He forced your hand. If I'd been in your position, I should have done the same."

"No, you wouldn't, St. Jeames."

"Please don't blame yourself," said Rodney. "I can't bear it."

"Why did you give me champagne?"

"As a medicine," said Rodney. "You've had a trying day."

"Will you do me a favour?"

"Perhaps."

"Open another bottle and drink it yourself."

"That's very sweet of you," said Rodney.

"But I'm a butler all right. I drank what you left."

Estelle shook her head.

"A butler would have opened a bottle: you only opened a half-bottle."

She sipped her coffee thoughtfully, with her eyes on the fire.

At length—

"Wasn't he magnificent?" she said.

"With Frederick, I mean."

"He was always magnificent," said Rodney, taking her cup. He hesitated. "And I shall always be proud to remember that I was his—man."

"Thank you, St. Jeames," said Estelle shakily. "I wish he could have seen you. He used to say he wished he could. He liked you so very much. He was always saying 'What should we do without him?'. And—and—— Oh, St. Jeames, I don't know what we should."

She flung herself down on the sofa and burst into tears.

Rodney knelt by her side and said what he could.

After awhile she sat up with her hands to her eyes.

"I think," he said gravely, "that you should go to bed."

She nodded, and they got to their feet.

"Good night," she whispered and put out a little hand.

"Sleep well, great heart," said Rodney.

Then he bowed his head and put the hand to his lips.

The other hand touched his hair.

"I wish he could have seen you," she whispered.

The next moment she was gone.

* * * * *

Five days later, Sir Richard, last baronet, went to his long home.

After the quiet funeral, the whole of which Rodney arranged, old Scarlet of Cockcrow had some speech with Estelle. Amongst other things, they agreed that she should become his guest upon the following day.

"For as long as you like, my dear. Amy will love to have you, and I'll see you through the Will."

"Thank you very much," said Estelle.

When he had gone, she went at once to her bedroom and there remained. Her dinner was sent upstairs.

The next was a summer's day.

Walking back from the gate-house, whither he had carried the suit-case of the protesting nurse, Rodney found Feathers the most beautiful seat in the world.

Not a breath of wind ruffled the delicate armour of that King's Company of elms: the song of a lark fell out of a cloudless sky: wood-pigeons called from the beechwoods, and, somewhere at hand, a cuckoo was insisting upon the pride of the year: the park was all wet silver, and the house a warm, grey mystery, filched from some comfortable dream.

The man passed through the mansion and entered the library. This was cool and full of the scent of flowers: it had been swept and garnished two hours before. Old oak, steel and silver flashed in the light of the sun: the leather walls were glowing: above the door that led to the terrace the purple of wistaria swayed and trembled under the robbery of bees.

Rodney's quick eye could find no fault with the chamber: it was as fit for his lady as his hand could make a room.

He turned to see Estelle in the doorway, a slight figure, clad in black.

"I beg your pardon, madam. I did not know you were there."

Estelle inclined her head.

"Good morning," she said.

"Good morning, madam."

She passed to a window-seat, and Rodney stepped to the door.

"Wait a minute," she said. And then, "I'm going away."

"Very good, madam."

"Lord Scarlet has asked me to Cockcrow. It's better so. And he'll help me out with the Will. You'll take it easy, won't you, while I'm away? You must be worn out."

"Thank you, madam."

"I shan't stay more than ten days, and, when I come back, we'll—we'll pick up

the reins again. I shan't go to London this year."

Rodney moistened his lips. Then he took a deep breath.

"I can't stay, Estelle," he said.

The girl sat still as death.

Presently her eyes sought his.

"What do you mean?"

"I've—I've served my turn," said Rodney, "and so I must go. While Sir Richard lived, it was different."

"Your consideration for him is not extended to me?"

"You know that's untrue," said Rodney.

"Then, why, the moment he's dead, do you let me down?"

"I'm not letting you down, Estelle."

"Why play with words?" said the girl.

"If you go, I must give up Feathers. You know that as well as I."

Rodney put a hand to his head.

"I can't help it," he said miserably.

"Oh, can't you see what I mean?"

Estelle rose to her feet.

"Do you mean to insult me by suggesting that, now that Sir Richard is dead, I can't have a manservant here?"

"I'm not a servant," said Rodney.

"And there's the rub."

"I should have agreed with you—a moment ago. But I see that, like all servants, you can't stand corn."

Rodney went very pale.

"You will please take that back, madam."

Estelle shrugged her shoulders.

"And if I refuse?" she said.

"Then I must leave to-day."

"Very well."

Rodney inclined his head and passed to the door.

With his hand on the latch, he turned.

"Estelle," he said, "don't let us part like this. I put it all wrong, I know: but I'm only thinking of you. If I had my way, my dear, I'd wait upon you, hand and foot, for the rest of my life."

"Yet you pretend to care what people like Frederick might say."

Rodney stepped to a window and stood looking out.

The sunlit park seemed blurred as he strove to marshal his words. He put his hands on the sill and bowed his head. After a little he spoke.

"I don't suppose I should care, if I didn't love you. But I do love you, you see: and that's what tears everything up."

Estelle neither spoke nor moved, and presently Rodney went on.

"That night, at the Jermyns', I fell in love with you. . . . I found out who you were, and I set out to make our fortune as quick as I could. I was so wild to make it that within six months I'd lost every penny I had. Well, that was the end of my dream. . . . But I thought that, at least, I could be near you, so I worked my passage from London down to your gate. At Cockcrow they told me that Redfern was wanting a cowman at Bluecoat Farm. I was going to ask for the job, when you rode down to the gate. I saw my chance, and took it. The rest you know. . . . I came because I loved you. And now, because I love you, I'm going away."

A warm arm stole round his neck.

Rodney clung to the sill with all his might.

Estelle laid her cheek against his.

"Can't we find a way out, St. Jeames? I mean, I've loved you for ages. In fact, to tell you the truth, that's why I took you on."

The man started at that: but he held to the sill.

"I've not a penny, Estelle. I can't live upon you."

"You're to be Lord Scarlet's land-agent. His own will retire next Easter and, till then, he'll teach you his job."

The man braced himself.

"There's something I've never told you," he said at length. "Something you don't suspect. It was I . . . that night . . . at the Jermyns' . . . that dropped you into the bed."

The arm round his neck drew tighter.

"I know," breathed Estelle.

She was close in his arms and her face two inches from his.

"You know?" he gasped. "You knew?"

Estelle nodded gravely. Then she raised her eyebrows and lowered her glorious eyes.

"And if I may say so, St. Jeames, your manners were better then."

Rodney released her, staring.

"What do you mean?"

"You certainly dropped me into the flower-bed, but at least you had the good taste to kiss me first."

For two minutes the world stood still. . . .

At length—

"What's your full name, my darling?"

"John Rodney Shere."

Estelle nodded approvingly.

"But I think," she said, "I shall always call you 'St. Jeames'."

THE MESSENGER

By H. MORTIMER BATTEN

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ALAN ROSS, the gamekeeper, was just starting on his round that early spring morning when he met the stranger at the wood end.

"Hello, Ross!" was the cordial greeting. "I was just on my way to see you. You will remember me, no doubt?"

Ross took the proffered hand, staring into the other man's face. He was a young man, lean and athletic, simply but becomingly attired in the usual tweeds of the hill country.

"Yes, sir, I remember you," said Ross eventually. "Mr. Anderson, I believe? You were one of his lordship's guests two years ago, at the time that——"

"That's it," agreed the other. "Man, what a memory you have! I was one of the house-party at the time when that deplorable affair took place. Well, I want you to lend me a hand if you can spare an hour or so."

Wondering what on earth could have brought Mr. Anderson into the Highlands at this time of the year, Ross agreed readily enough to lend what help he could.

"Just a little climbing stunt," Mr. Anderson explained. "You know these hills better than anyone, Ross, and are an expert climber. I'm not. By the way, we had better take your retriever back to the kennels, and I'll explain on the way."

"No need to bother about the dog, sir," Ross replied. "She will squat where I tell her and wait all day."

But Anderson was obdurate. "I'd rather we didn't take her," said he. "I'm a bit nervous when climbing, especially on this loose rock. She might try to follow us down, and set the stones moving."

So they walked back towards the kennels, and Anderson continued to explain—"I'm a bit of a naturalist, you know, Ross, and there's no time to waste. I'd like to get there while this mist is hanging about—not that anyone would be likely to see us, but I don't want any publicity. By the way, you never heard any more about—This way, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir, that's the way to the kennels, but I was going home to leave word with my wife."

"No need, Ross," Anderson assured him. "We shall be back inside two hours. We'll just fasten up the dog, then get under way without losing time."

"I doubt if the mist will lift to-day, sir," Ross told him. "It's coming in from the sea, and the glass is falling. We'll likely have dirty weather. Where do you want to go?"

"Well," Anderson resumed, "that's what we are arriving at. I'm a bit of a naturalist, I was telling you, but have not had much experience of cliff-climbing. By the way, you can use a camera, can't you?—just an ordinary pocket affair like we use on the moor."

Ross said he thought he could, though somewhat lacking in experience, whereupon Anderson went off into a long explanation as to the use of a view-finder and the working of a shutter. By that time the retriever was safely kennelled, and they were back at the wood end, with the house screened from view. Anderson was still talking hard, and they were well down the hill before he touched again on the main subject.

"I suppose you know, Ross," he said, "that an eagle has her eyrie just down from the summit of the Black Point?"

"I didn't know, sir," Ross replied. "I haven't been that way for some weeks, and I didn't know there was an eyrie within ten miles."

"Well, she has," Anderson assured him. "I've been watching her closely. She will have eggs by now."

"Sure it isn't a buzzard?" Ross asked.

"Certain," said Anderson, with a faint smile. "I've seen scores of eagles and buzzards."

Ross grunted. "If you are after the eggs, sir, I'm afraid I can't help you. I have strict instructions from his lordship to protect the eagles."

"Eggs?—no! What I want is a photograph of the eyrie and its contents, and if

you can get it for me there's a five-pound note for you."

"Thank you, sir," said Ross, "but I'm thinking we'll need to go back for ropes."

"Oh, that's all right," Anderson told him. "I've got them, the pukka Alpine stuff. I dumped the whole lot at the brow of the cliff instead of carrying it round to your place and back. We shall be there in ten minutes."

"Not in this direction," the keeper pointed out. "The Black Point is away to our left. We are tacking off in the wrong direction."

Anderson looked a trifle puzzled as he surveyed the wide expanse of moorland. "By Jove, you're right!" said he. "This mist is bewildering when you don't know the country too well. I could have sworn this was the way I came."

"So it is," Ross told him. "Here are your tracks, but you must have come a long way round."

They hit off through the heather, and Anderson resumed, "You know the cliff, don't you, Ross? Climbed it after sea-birds' eggs? Good. Well, from what I can make out, there's quite a considerable cave about sixty feet down."

"There is, sir, but it's difficult to get at. I've never been in it. It needs two of you. You have to go down on the rope, then the top man makes fast while the bottom man does a traverse to the shelf. From that he can swing across on the rope."

"Gee!" muttered Anderson. "That's what I thought. Takes some nerve, with four hundred feet and the sea below! You are equal to it, I suppose?"

Ross said that he was equal to a good deal at the price of a fiver. "It presents no danger with good ropes," he asserted, "but if there's no eagle——"

"If there's no eagle you'll get your fiver all the same," Anderson assured him. "The ropes are brand new, the best procurable. Hello, that looks like the sea!"

"It is, and there's the point. The cave is just to the left of it. We'll make fast immediately above."

The camera and the rope were lying where Anderson had hidden them, also a business-like little crowbar. Ross went over the rope carefully, and pronounced his satisfaction, then both men walked to the edge of the cliff. Thousands of gulls wheeled and screamed about their nesting shelves below, and the foot of the cliff was so far off that they could only just discern an occasional twinkling of the sea.

At the decided point Ross made fast the rope at the brink, utilising the iron bar, and he noticed that Mr. Anderson had turned decidedly blotchy, and that his hands were trembling. He hastened to reassure him as to the safety of the climb. "I shall go down first, and dislodge any loose stuff the rope might disturb," he said. "You give me twenty feet start, then take your time about it and rest when you want to. Don't look down—watch your footholds and your handholds, and don't stir till I give the word, as I might be directly below."

Anderson took a brief pull at his flask, and Ross heaved the coil of rope down into giddy space. He slung the camera over his shoulder, then with a final word of reassurance to Mr. Anderson, stepped boldly backwards over the edge.

Within two minutes Ross's cheery call came from below—"Down you come, sir. It's all straight walking."

Cautiously, groping and testing every foothold, Mr. Anderson followed, and after the first few steps he began to obtain confidence. By the time he had reached Ross he was more or less calm.

"That's it, sir," said the keeper. "You're doing fine. Now we'll rest and get used to it. The cave is just round the corner and fifty feet lower. You can't see it from here—neither can I see any eagle."

"She's here all the same," Anderson insisted. "I scared her off this morning, and as she isn't sitting, she won't be in a hurry to come back. They tell me that eagles used always to breed here fifty years ago."

"That's so, but they haven't been since I was a boy," said Ross. "Now, if you are ready, we'll go on. You will follow me down to that ledge ten feet lower, and stay there while I climb to the one below. Then I shall traverse to the right, and when I stop you also will traverse till you are above me and just beyond, where you will make the rope fast, and I shall swing across."

"Go ahead then," said Anderson.

Everything worked as smoothly and as easily as might have been. Ross made his traverse without the rope, then having reached his stand he shouted to Anderson to follow the ledge he was on till he was above and slightly beyond. Cautiously and carefully Anderson made fast at that point, giving the rope a half hitch and bracing himself firmly as he gripped it, then, everything ready, Ross took his grip

and swung lightly across, landing safely on the shelf within a few feet of the cave-mouth. It looked the simplest thing on earth, and so it was when done as Ross did it. Looking up he could see Mr. Anderson directly above. The man had changed colour again, and was watching him wide-eyed, and Ross once more doubted his own wisdom at risking the climb with such a novice. Taking out the camera, he went over to the cave-mouth and began to grope his way towards its shadowy interior.

No, as he had half expected, there was no eyrie—only a great bundle of decayed ling, probably fifty years old, piled in a corner near the entrance as evidence of the occupation of a bygone generation of eagles. What Anderson had seen was probably an odd bird flying about the cliffs, as the great birds of prey so often frequent their ancient nesting haunts in the spring, even though they no longer nest there. He was about to return and shout the disappointing news to Mr. Anderson when his eyes rested on something white among the shadows a few feet in.

The instant Ross saw it, cold fingers seemed to trace their tips down his spine. He was aware of something very near to a sense of horror, though as yet he did not know what the white thing was. It was as though some occult presence had suddenly taken its place beside him at the cave-mouth, and for a moment Ross stood, his gaze fixedly held,

"Still Anderson stared, and Ross scarcely noticed that slowly, coolly he was drawing up the rope. . . . I know there is, Ross, and if you don't do what I tell you, there will be two skeletons in that cave before long!"



then he went slowly forward. He stooped over it, struck a match and examined it closely. The thing he had seen was the skeleton of a human face, and there, at his feet, lay a fully-clothed skeleton! The clothes were covered with white dust and evidence of seabird life, though clearly they had once been of blue serge. On the left hand was a gold ring, and at the man's side lay a black leather bag such as doctors carry. The skeleton fingers still clutched the handle of it.

These details Ross took in during that momentary glance, then he turned back to the cave-mouth and the daylight. He looked up at Mr. Anderson, who had shifted his position slightly so as to obtain a better view.

"Mr. Anderson!" Ross shouted. "There's a skeleton in here—a human skeleton, the remains of a man!"

Anderson's fixed stare did not waver. His white face remained expressionless. "A skeleton!" he echoed.

"Yes, sir. The skeleton of a man."

"Holy smoke!" muttered Anderson thickly. "Is there anything else?"

"No," replied Ross. "That's enough, isn't it? Just a skeleton, holding a black bag."

Still Anderson stared, and Ross scarcely noticed that slowly, coolly he was drawing up the rope.

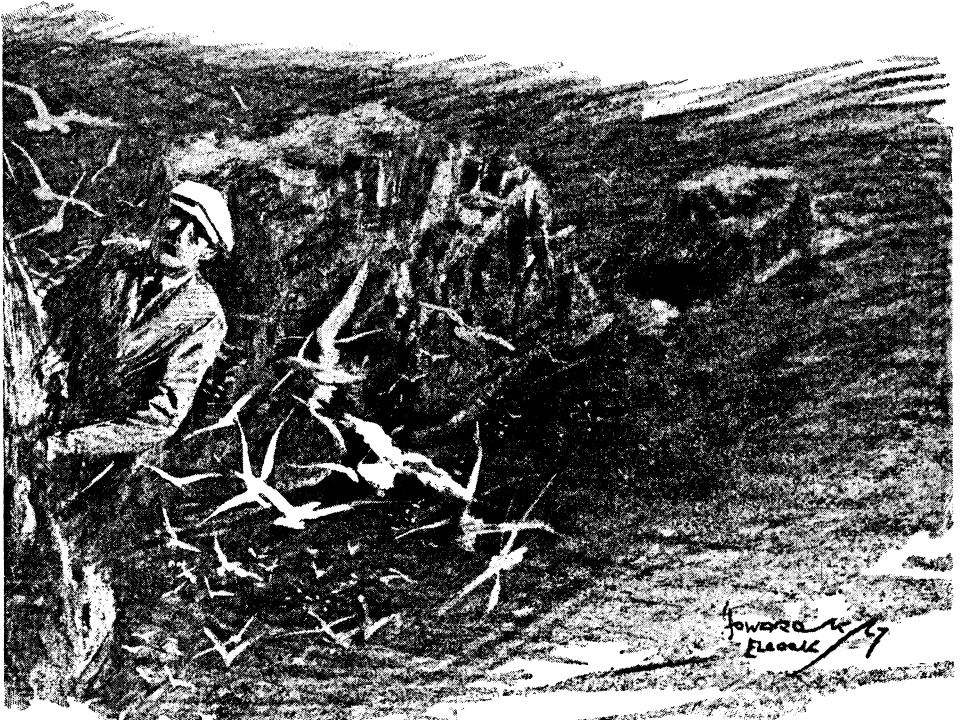
"I know there is," came Anderson's response, and it took some moments for Ross to realise the significance of his words.

Anderson waited for them to sink in, and watching the keeper's face he went on in the same even tone—"I know there is, Ross, and if you don't do what I tell you, there will be two skeletons in that cave before long!"

For some seconds the two men stared at each other, while the sun tried to fight its way through the mist, and below a thousand gulls wheeled and screamed and creaked—now like the laughter of a crazy woman, now yell after yell as of some poor wretch in torment. Ross had always loved those cliffs. A naturalist at heart, they were among his happiest hunting grounds, but a sudden, sinister gloom had settled upon them.

"You may as well explain yourself, Mr. Anderson," said Ross, the words framing themselves almost without his knowledge.

Anderson settled himself comfortably. "I will," he answered. "Take your mind back two years to the time I was staying at the Lodge as a guest. Well, I was a



"'Mr. Anderson!' Ross shouted. 'There's a skeleton in here—a human skeleton, the remains of a man!'"

guest, though I had only myself to thank for it. I was there for my own purpose." Anderson paused.

"You mean—the jewellery?" Ross shouted.

Anderson nodded. "I do mean the jewellery. Every stick of it was pinched, you remember, and the guests who did not lose anything had nothing to lose. Lee, the butler, disappeared, and has never been heard of since. When his history was sorted out, it was found that he was a professional cracksman, and his lordship looked a fool. So he is a fool, or I would never have wormed my way in among his guests."

"You mean that you also were in it?" said Ross, almost incredulously.

Again Anderson nodded. "We're coming to that," said he. "Lee disappeared, I say, also the jewellery. Well, that's Lee in there, and the jewellery is in the black bag!"

Again there was a silence, while Anderson coolly lit a cigarette. "You get me, Ross?" he went on. "We came down together with a rope to hide the stuff, and because Lee wouldn't agree to my terms, I left him there, just as"—and a wolfish look came into Anderson's eyes—"just as I shall leave you if you don't agree to my terms!"

The red blood was rising to the roots of the keeper's red hair. "You devil!" he muttered. "You low-down scoundrel!"

"I know," Anderson agreed airily. "I don't profess to be anything else. It's my business, and the only thing which concerns you is coming to some kind of an arrangement. You don't stand to make anything on this deal. All you've got to consider is your own skin, and if you think it over, your position isn't very enviable. No one knows where you are, and you couldn't make anyone hear. The cave is so placed that ten thousand to one a boat at sea would never notice you. That you know for yourself. They hunted every yard for Lee—the whole country-side, everyone. You and I helped, you will remember, just as I shall help them hunt for you. I took darned good care no one saw us go, and no man alive could ever get out of that cave without a rope. Now, suppose you listen to business."

Ross sat down and mopped his forehead. "Go ahead," said he, and Anderson continued.

"It's simple and obvious. All you've got to do is to fasten that black bag to the

end of the rope for me to pull up. The bag is locked, and it's no use your tampering with its contents, because I know what should be there."

"Then what?" Ross queried.

"Then you will just have to possess your soul in patience and make the best of an uncomfortable business for a day or two. I won't keep you an hour longer than I can help. As soon as I safely can, someone will receive a message as to where you are. I give you my word for that."

Ross laughed. "Your word!" he repeated. "That promises to be a mighty lot to hang one's chance on! Honour among thieves, eh?" And he jerked his thumb towards the darkness of the cave.

"That may be so," Anderson admitted, "but it's all you've got to bank on. Hand over that bag, and you need not fear."

But it occurred to Ross how wildly improbable it was that Anderson would fulfil his promise, thus making public the full details of the crime, even to the cold-blooded murder of his confederate Lee. Why, the man's own colleagues would do him in if these facts became known.

"Suppose I refuse?" Ross asked eventually.

"Then you will just die in the cave, same as Lee did. Isn't that sufficient evidence for you? Then in due course I shall get some other juggins to come along, and he will find two skeletons."

Ross rose and groped his way into the dark mouth. Once inside he thought it over, then taking his knife, he ripped open the bag. Yes, it was full of the stolen jewellery, Lee's stark fingers still avariciously upon the handle, as though he had hoped to the last to retain possession.

At length Ross went back to the cave-mouth. He could just see Anderson through a chink between the rocks. "Anderson," he shouted, "or whatever your filthy name may be, I'm going to stay here, and you can go to blazes! You would leave me here in any case, and it's all a lie about sending a message. Now you can get out."

"You had better think it over again," Anderson replied. "It's a pretty grim decision of yours."

"Don't bother your head about that," Ross replied. "I'm here, and you don't count. You aren't getting this jewellery at any price, so you can go."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Quite sure."

"All right," Anderson retorted harshly.

"You'll have a different tale to tell when I come back three nights hence. Starvation and cold and loneliness can work wonders. You might just as well give in now as then. You'll only make the time longer for yourself."

"I'll chance it," replied Ross.

For ten minutes or so Anderson did not stir, then he gripped the rope, and with a final shout to Ross, climbed out of sight.

Ross waited a full hour before he stirred, then he fell to examining the cliff face immediately about the cave. He saw at a glance the physical impossibility of escape—not even a chamois could have found its way up or down. His mind was already becoming dazed at the magnitude of his predicament, and already he was beginning to think in circles. One thing was certain—that if he were going to make any kind of a fight, he must make it at once while he were still fit and his nerves were steady—but how? He was as fast as a thief behind prison bars.

Thinking thus, he was suddenly startled by a bird, which almost flew into his face as it tried to enter the cave. It swerved and alighted on a rock within arm's reach of him, and Ross stretched out his hand slowly, steadily, to catch it. It remained till his fingers were within an inch, then it flew off and disappeared.

An idea occurred to Ross, bearing a faint ray of hope—faint, but a hope nevertheless. He groped in his pockets, and—yes, good luck, found a stump of lead pencil. He produced an old envelope, and on it he wrote a brief but carefully worded message. He read it several times to assure himself that it contained all necessary particulars, then pulling some threads from his coat he bound it up into a neat little packet the size of a match. Three of these notes he wrote and prepared, then he retired to the darkness of the cave, where the gruesome thing lay, and sat in silence, watching. He had already assured himself that there was no way out in that direction—the cave ended in solid bedrock.

That night Ross had no luck, though he did not lack company. The bats kept fluttering into his face and his hands till he came to loathe them, and once an owl paid him a visit and hooted long and dolefully at the cave-mouth. The gulls screamed unceasingly through the night, and dawn found him cold and wretched. He thought of his wife—of his friends, who would now be scouring the hills for him. They were

so near, and yet so far away! He was hungry, but he might be hungrier yet, and it was not till the day was well on that he felt the first pangs of thirst. Soon it came on wild and wet, and he amused himself by drinking the drops of water from the rocks.

While he was at it a pigeon flew in—another pigeon, and, like the first, a domestic Homer. It alighted on a rock just out of the rain, and proceeded to preen its feathers. It, too, drank the drops of water, and Ross saw that it was wet and tired, having evidently flown a great distance. He dare not stir hand or foot for fear of alarming it, but dusk was not far off, and if he left it undisturbed doubtless it would roost there. So for a solid hour Ross never moved a muscle, and by that time it was quite dark. Cold and cramped, he rose, inch by inch, clutching the rocks for support, then slowly he raised one hand—six inches, five, four, then he clutched. The pigeon uttered a startled "coo," and he could feel its little heart beating. What a feeble thing on which to pin his life—what a frail hope, indeed! Holding it firmly, but gently, he struck one of his precious matches and examined its wings—yes, every wing feather was stamped with the name and address of the owner, at Ostend—"My hat! Old Ostend!"

With infinite pains Ross bound his message to one of the tail feathers, then he returned the pigeon to its resting-place, and to his surprise it remained there. He thought he sat the whole night with his gaze fixed upon it, yet he recalled strange dreams, all vivid, some pleasant, some bad, ere he noticed the first streak of dawn. The pigeon noticed it too, and darted off. Ross ran to the cave-mouth to see it go—flying south, swift and straight as an arrow. So his little messenger was gone!

After that Ross spent hours working out how long it would take if all went as it might, and how long allowing for the probable hitches. Then he sank into gloomy despair at the realisation that probably nothing would happen at all. He spent the remainder of that day swayed by conflicting emotions—one moment elated at the certainty that his message would get through all right, and the next dead certain that it never would. The screaming of the gulls was beginning to get on his brain, and he tightened his belt another notch or two. So the night went by, another day, then night again.

Long after the fall of darkness Anderson had the colossal audacity to return.

"Well, Ross," said he, seating himself coolly on the point above, "they've had a good look for you, but they don't stand a lame duck's chance. They've about given it up. You ought to see your wife's face, man. She looks like a hunted animal, and your two little kiddies clinging to her crying for their daddy. I tell you, you can't have much heart. It's your duty to them to get out of this at any price. Hand up those doings."

so long as he was clutching it. You, on the other hand, need to remember that that bag holds your last chance, and life is sweet to a man with a wife and two children. I shall come back to-morrow night to see if you have changed your mind."

"You needn't trouble," Ross answered. "By to-morrow night the stuff will have gone."

"If it is," Anderson muttered savagely, "you will starve! You can take that for granted. So long as the stuff is there, you stand a sporting chance. Im-



"He was suddenly startled by a bird, which almost flew into his face as it tried to enter the cave. It swerved and alighted on a rock within arm's reach of him, and Ross stretched out his hand slowly, steadily, to catch it."

"Hur!" growled Ross. "I shouldn't gain much by that. And look here, Anderson, talking about bargains, you can leave me here to starve if you like, but you needn't imagine that you'll get that stuff, because the last thing I shall do will be to throw it out, bit by bit, all in different directions—you with your darned clever idea of coming back for it when I am dead!"

"Yes," said Anderson quietly, "of course I realise that there is a chance of your doing that. I rather wonder that Lee didn't do it, but he was different stuff—too darned avaricious to let go the swag so long as he was alive; and believe me he died happy

mediately it goes, that chance also goes."

"I stand a sporting chance in any case," Ross asserted. "For all you know, the police may be watching you now. You want to get hold of it as much as I do, so listen to this. Let me down twenty feet of rope. I can't leave the cave till daybreak, and it will take me several hours to climb out, if I ever do in my present state. That will give you nearly twenty-four hours' start, which should be enough for you. Give me the rope and I'll give you the bag."

There was a pause, then—"I wouldn't trust you, Ross. Give me the bag first, then you shall have your twenty feet of rope."

"Lower the rope for it, then," said Ross promptly.

He waited, then down the rocks slid a miserable length of cord no thicker than a wax vesta, and Ross saw that his opponent had seen through his plan. Ross had meant to seize the rope, and Anderson would have had no alternative but to cut it at his end, giving him at any rate some feet to play with. Ross clutched the end of the cord, and to it he attached the mortal remains of Lee, bidding Anderson haul.

"I thought that was your game," Anderson said when he had pulled up his gruesome load through the darkness.

"It's all you'll get, anyway," said Ross. "When you come back there won't be even a skeleton to greet you. Now get rid of it the best way you can. It's yours. If you let it fall, a hundred to one it will hitch up on the rocks somewhere, and someone will see it. You had better take it with you. It's the only kind of company you are fit to associate with."

Anderson chose to cut the cord, and the thing clattered down past the cave-mouth, and—down, amidst the unearthly screaming of the gulls.

"Well, so long, Ross," Anderson shouted. "See you again to-morrow night."

"So long!" Ross answered.

From the moon, Ross judged that it was now after midnight, and he wondered—heavens, how he wondered! He was strangely excited, and he seemed to have been wondering for hours when, as though in a dream, he again heard Anderson's voice. "Ross! I say, Ross!"

"Well?"

"You were right, Ross. There are men at the top of the cliff waiting for me. I can feel them—I saw one of them move! They're waiting behind the rocks alongside the rope, so I guess my little game is up."

"I guess so," Ross agreed. "Glad to hear it. That will mean one swine less on earth, anyway."

Anderson chuckled—a cool, mirthless chuckle. "They haven't got me yet, old son," said he.

"But they will, dead or alive," Ross prophesied.

"It will be dead, then," said Anderson.

"Good," Ross muttered, "but I'm thinking your kind don't die so easily. Listen, Anderson, if you want to know what's happened. I caught a Homer pigeon and sent a message by it. They would get that

message at Ostend, and evidently they have been busy on the wire. The police don't lose much time."

"Ostend?" echoed Anderson. "Good old Ostend!"

"Were you there?" Ross asked.

"Yes."

"Then it's a pity you ever came back! What do you intend to do now?"

"Go on down," came the answer.

"No good," Ross told him. "The last fifty feet is naked rock, sheer down into the sea."

"It's better than going up, anyway," Anderson replied.

"Suit yourself, but I should go up if I were you. If you go down, no one will see your photo in the papers as that of the author of about the most brutal murder on record. It's some story, Anderson—the intended double crime, the pigeon, and the final recovery of the jewels! Give them a show for their money."

"They'll get the show all right," Anderson answered. "It's just about to begin."

As he spoke, a voice snapped out at them across the darkness of the cliff face—a voice startlingly near. "Who's that?" and instantly a blue tongue of fire cut through the darkness by Anderson's right hand.

Ross ducked back into the cave, but he heard Anderson mutter—"Winged that blighter, anyway!"

Those were the last words Anderson ever spoke, for in an instant a veritable volley of pistol-shots once more sent the affrighted gulls screaming into space. From the mouth of the cave Ross saw Anderson scrambling recklessly down the rock face, sliding, clutching for a handhold, then down again, just as, a few minutes ago, the remains of his old accomplice had fallen, down and out of sight, and out of the world and the ken of man for all time.

Ross was somewhat dazed when the climbers got to him, still more dazed when, by his own hearth, he found himself confronted by a weeping wife and a friendly police officer.

"Well, Alan," said the officer, "it has been a grand thing for ye, and a' tae yer credit. Can ye no pull yersel' thegither, maun, and tell us something?"

Alan thought. "There's yin thing I can tell ye," said he, lapsing into his own lingo, "that never again, sae long as I'm alive, will I eat pigeon pie!"

AN EMPTY CHAIR

◉ ◉ By RALPH DURAND ◉ ◉

◉ ◉ ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE ◉ ◉

A SENSE of grievance is no part of the dowry that a bride should bring her husband, yet Winifred Neville had to fight hard against the feeling that Peter Darrell did not at all appreciate how much she was giving up for his sake. Peter's brief career at a University had ended so ignominiously, after he had been ploughed in smalls, that service abroad had seemed the only possible career open to him, but even when he had left England, to make his way in the world as far as the point at which he could afford to marry, Winifred had already become a better Greek scholar than many an Oxford don; and during the five years in which he had been taming a tribe of truculent African savages sufficiently to make it possible to bring a white woman into their country, she had made for herself a reputation that established her as the intellectual peer of any don whatever. Her thesis *On Homer's use of the Hexameter* had been given a full-column review in the Literary Supplement of *The Times*, had brought her letters from foreign savants, and had been quoted at the Women's International Congress at Geneva as proof that sex is no barrier to even the highest ranks of scholarship. Yet now she was on her way to live a life of hardship with a man who had long since forgotten the difference between a dactyl and a spondee, in a country where she would seldom meet a woman of her own colour and never anyone, man or woman, whose scholarship would rank with hers—and in a few years' time the name she was soon to give up would be forgotten even by those who had acclaimed it most loudly!

Her sense of grievance would have been easier to stifle if Peter had come home to fetch her instead of leaving her to face alone a journey of which the discomforts increased progressively the farther she got from England. At Capetown she had had to tranship from a Union-Castle liner into a dingy little coasting-steamer in which the bathroom could not be reached without passing

the cook's galley, and the engineers sat at meals with the passengers in the clothes they wore in the engine-room. This had carried her to a rawly-new seaport town, built of staring galvanised iron on a sandpit in the middle of a mangrove swamp, and inhabited principally by mosquitoes. She had then travelled for a day and a night in a train that progressed at the pace of a steam-tram, the movements of which appeared to be regulated not by a time-table but by conferences at each stopping-place between the driver and the Eurasian station-master. The management of the railway made no provision for the feeding of its passengers, and Winifred was reduced to picnicking on biscuits, sardines, and warm soda-water, purchased for the journey at the seaport, though sometimes at the stopping-places the engine-driver offered her a share of the tea that he made for himself with water from his boiler.

The last fifty miles of railway track had been constructed with more speed than stability, to carry foodstuffs for a famine that, six months before, had raged in Megobaniland, and the train crawled forward gingerly, bumping and swaying, till it reached a construction-camp notable for heat, glare, dust and flies. From this point onwards the unmetalled rails would not carry the weight of a train, and Winifred completed the journey to Lake Madzikulu on a trolley pushed by running natives and escorted by an unshaved foreman navvy who swore at them in her presence and addressed her as "my gal."

At Kilibula, the head-quarters of the administration of Megobaniland, the whole resident British population, six people in all, received her with honour, but it was made quite clear to her that the honour was reflected from Peter. Sir Humphrey Stark, the Commissioner, spoke of him as the most conscientious man in the Megobaniland service. Lady Stark considered him one of the nicest boys she knew. Brazen-bridge—railway-contractor, transport-agent

and general merchant—declared that a man with his gift for making niggers sit up and take notice could earn five times as much as the Government paid him if he were to work for his own hand. And MacLeod, the Resident Magistrate, spoke of his coolness and pluck in tight corners as if that was the only subject in which Winifred was likely to take any interest. All this was very gratifying, but it irked her just a little that it occurred to none of them to refer to her own pluck and self-sacrifice in consenting to live in a district so remotely at the Back of Beyond that Kilibula was regarded in comparison as a metropolis.

Winifred stayed three days at Kilibula as the guest of Lady Stark, and during that time that excellent lady, who regarded herself as *ex officio* the honorary mother of every man in the Megobaniland service, talked just a little too insistently about what she called “your future duties, my dear.”

“It will make all the difference in the world to Mr. Darrell to have someone to look after him,” she said. “He is so keen on his job that I feel sure he seldom finds time to see that his kitchen is kept properly clean. You will find that natives make excellent cooks if you train them well, but they need constant watching to keep them up to the mark.”

Winifred’s heart sank. In her uncle’s house in Ilchester she had sometimes, when not too deeply engaged in classical research, gone through a formal pretence of discussing with a highly efficient cook-housekeeper what Canon Neville would like for his dinner, but she had never penetrated into that housekeeper’s kitchen since the days when she was young enough to be interested in the manufacture of toffee.

“Your husband’s clothes won’t give you much trouble,” continued Lady Stark. “Natives are really quite clever at darning, and their method of washing clothes, though primitive, is not really so destructive as that of an English steam laundry; but cooking is, in this country, all-important. When a man who works as hard as Mr. Darrell sits down to his meal worn out with heat and hard work, and his cook puts in front of him an atrociously served meal that is half raw or burned to a cinder, he is apt to fall back on wretched tinned stuff—and no one can keep fit on bully beef or warmed-up Alaska salmon. If there were better cooks in this country, there would be fewer wrecked careers. Too often some poor fellow, with less grit than Mr. Darrell, gets

into the way of starting a meal with whisky, to give him a fictitious appetite for the nasty mess his *bandazi* puts in front of him: and he drinks more, and eats less, till—a notice appears in the ‘Gazette’ that ‘His Majesty has no further need for his services.’ And that reminds me! I want you to be nice to your neighbour, the man who looks after the branch of Brazenbridge’s stores at your end of the lake. I am afraid that he looks in the whisky-bottle for the excitement that his work doesn’t give him. You’ll find him a difficult case because he doesn’t care for reading, never talks—except when he isn’t quite sober—and then talks abstruse theology.”

Winifred’s forebodings took on a still gloomier hue. She had had even less training for the rôle of being what is called “a good influence” than she had for the duties of house-management. At home in Ilchester her reputation as a blue-stocking had exempted her from duties ordinarily expected of unmarried ladies. She had never been a district visitor, never helped to organise a Band of Hope Tea, never ever distributed a parish magazine. The prospect of frequently asking to dinner a man not of her own social rank, who had no interests which she could share, and from whose elbow she must tactfully remove the whisky-bottle, appalled her.

“But surely he won’t be my only neighbour?” she asked.

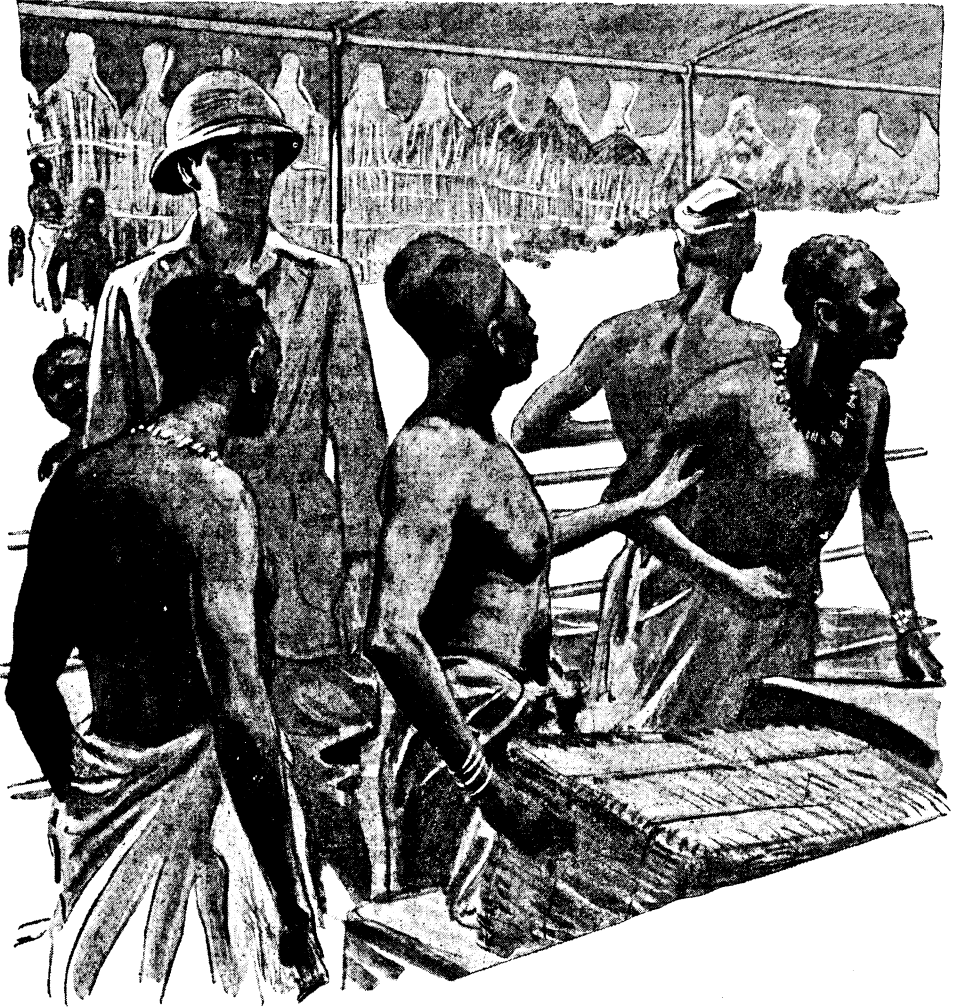
“Oh, no. The mission station is twelve miles away by land, but by canoe the journey would be much shorter and less tiring. Mr. Rock is quite a new-comer in your district. Sir Humphrey flatly refused to let him take his wife up there until Mr. Darrell succeeded in persuading the Wanazoa to give up their firearms. It will be a great help and encouragement to the Rocks if you sometimes visit them, to attend his church services and inspect her school.” Lady Stark laughed. “As the Collector’s wife, you see, you will be a person of importance.”

Whatever honours her future position held for Winifred seemed inadequate compensation for those she had given up, but during her stay at Kilibula she realised that Lady Stark worked hard to fulfil duties she assigned to herself, both as the Commissioner’s wife and as the only white woman that the community ever saw.

When Lady Stark heard that departmental friction had arisen between the senior official who was Resident Magistrate, Minister for Roads and Minister for Native Affairs, and the other who was Postmaster-General,

telegraph-operator and chief clerk of all the other departments of the Administration, she asked them both to dinner, so that they were compelled in her presence to be polite to each other. As serenely remote from social distinctions as a sovereign is from the squabbles of party politicians, she extended

for fuel, or how, in the muggy heat of the rainy season, to deal with goods on whose cases was stencilled "STORE IN A COOL DRY PLACE." She managed a circulating library for the whole of Megobaniland, and trained native servants in the hope that when trained they would spread elementary know-



"Half-naked blacks swarmed aboard, followed by a man whose face was so nearly the colour of saddle-leather that Winifred would not have known him for an Englishman if the masterful expression stamped on it by five years' rule over a truculent African tribe had not marked him as a member of the dominant race."

hospitality to the man who managed the Kilibula branch of Brazenbridge's stores, and, when he was in port, to the engineer-skipper of Brazenbridge's steam-launch that kept his other lakeside stores in touch with the outer world, and when they were seated at her table, contrived to express deep interest in such problems as how to keep up a decent head of steam with only green wood

ledge of cookery and hygienic principles among the staffs employed by such members of the Megobaniland Administration as had not the good fortune to live at Kilibula.

Lady Stark's example took effect to the extent of inspiring Winifred with a resolution to forget the honour she might have attained if she had remained in England, and to do her duty in the country to which her mar-

riage called her. But her good resolutions wilted under the discomforts of the last stage of her journey. Though the waves on Lake Madzikulu were small in comparison with the waves of the sea, the steam-launch, *Lady of the Lake*, was also small and supplied even more excuse for sea-sickness than is

the perspiring bodies of the native crew. And her mind was again mastered by a sense of the sacrifice she was making for Peter Darrell's sake when the *Lady of the Lake* approached the stockade surrounding a cluster of thatch-roofed huts that was pointed out to her as his *boma*.



"For a moment she thought that he must be Mr. Rock, the realised that the Peter Darrell she had promised to chuckle-headed boy . . . had passed out of her life and already grey at the temples . . .

missionary. Then, with a sickening pang, she marry, the impetuous, light-hearted, lovingly that this grave stranger, whose hair was had usurped his place."

afforded by a Channel steamer. The engineer-skipper surrendered the launch's one tiny cabin to her, but she found it so thickly infested with cockroaches that when the launch anchored for the night, she preferred to get what sleep she could reclining in a canvas chair on deck within twelve feet of

The launch slowed down till it gently nosed the sand of the lake-beach. A dozen half-naked blacks swarmed aboard, followed by a man whose face was so nearly the colour of saddle-leather that Winifred would not have known him for an Englishman if the masterful expression stamped on it by

five years' rule over a truculent African tribe had not marked him as a member of the dominant race. For a moment she thought that he must be Mr. Rock, the missionary. Then, with a sickening pang, she realised that the Peter Darrell she had promised to marry, the impetuous, light-hearted, lovably chuckle-headed boy, her opposite in every way, to whom she had given her heart, had passed out of her life and that this grave stranger, whose hair was already grey at the temples, whom it seemed impertinent to address by his Christian name, had usurped his place.

Great issues hang on slender threads. If the launch's deck had not been crowded with gaping blacks, if it had been possible for them to be alone at their first meeting, if he had taken her in his arms, the magic of a kiss might have bridged the years and made him the man heir to the love she had given to a boy. Because he did not do so—the Peter she had loved would have done it no matter who saw them—Winifred supposed that the treacherous years had made as great a change in her appearance as they had in his, and that for the moment he, too, hardly recognised her. In this she was wrong. Each year she had sent him a photograph to supplement that of the year before, so that, in his case, there was no gap to bridge. He stood aloof because, having scarcely seen a woman of his own race in all those five years, all white women had become in his eyes beings worthy of worship, and mortal men do not kiss goddesses without some word, some gesture, at least some hint of invitation.

Shyness clogged the tongues of both. Peter took off his hat, and Winifred bowed.

"Did you have a good journey?" he asked politely.

With equal politeness, Winifred suppressed all reference to the discomforts she had suffered.

"Quite, thank you," she said.

"I was sorry I could not come to Kilibula to meet you. It would have meant leaving my district to take care of itself for a whole month."

"It did not matter," said Winifred.

He helped her ashore, and neither spoke again as they walked side by side up the hill till they passed through the entrance to the stockade.

"This open space is the *bwalo* where I hold my court," said Peter. "I sit on that dais under the thatch awning and the people squat on the ground all round me."

They passed through a sentry-guarded opening into an inner enclosure.

"This is your garden," said Peter.

Winifred could see nothing but a few small trees and four parallel rows of oblong mats supported on three-foot-high sticks. She would not hurt his feelings by saying that it was unlike any garden she had ever seen, but she felt that she must say something, anything, no matter how commonplace.

"Is that a mango tree?" she asked.

"No. It's a loquat. The mangoes were all killed by white ants."

Peter rolled back one of the mats and showed some almost leafless geranium stalks.

"They have to be shaded from the sun during the heat of the day and they flower only in the rainy season," he said. "But they make quite a riot of colour then."

Beyond the garden was a semicircle of huts with roofs of thatch and walls of mud-plastered wattle. A professional architect could have made nothing better with native labour and local materials, but the most carefully built wattle-and-daub never looks anything but squalid. In one of the huts a native was laying a tablecloth of coarse trade cotton on a plain deal table.

"Will he send that man away and kiss me now?" Winifred asked herself. She felt shame at realising that she hoped he would not kiss her yet. The chill of their meeting, the squalor of the place that was to be her home, had made clamorous a question she could no longer stifle, a question that needed to be answered quickly before it was too late. And she did not want him to kiss her until she had decided on the answer. But Peter, instead of taking her into a hut in which at last they could be alone, turned aside to make her admire the view over the lake.

The launch had gone and was already half a mile away, heading towards the beach where stood the Wanazoa branch of Brazen-bridge's stores. Nearer in, a canoe, manned by six lustily singing paddlers, a man in white drill clothes sitting in her stern, was heading towards the *boma*.

"Here comes Rock, the missionary who is going to marry us," said Peter. "He is coming here because he is concerned in a case that I have to try this afternoon. The arrangement is that he takes us back with him in the cool of the evening, and marries us to-morrow. I thought we would walk back. We might get a bit of shooting, if we find any buck that have escaped the

rinderpest. Or I could get men to carry you in a hammock, if you would rather. I am often carried myself when I am so busy that I have to travel by night. Or, of course, we could come home by canoe, if you prefer it. Shall we go down and meet Rock?"

"By all means," faltered Winifred, too glad of the postponement of the moment when they would be alone to resent being deprived of the bride's privilege of being consulted in her own wedding arrangements.

"By the way—I hope you won't mind—Rock is a Wesleyan. Missionaries have found that the distinctions between one sect and another puzzle the minds of native converts, so they have come to an agreement not to poach on each other's preserves. Rock was first in the field here, so of course no Church of England man is available."

Winifred thought of the stately cathedral in which she had been used to worship, of the people of her own race who would have gathered there to see her married, of the dear old Bishop who would have given her his blessing, of the glad sound of the wedding-march that would have pealed from the organ—if Peter had come home to marry her instead of making her come to him to be married before a gaping crowd of blacks in a strange land by a stranger not of her own communion. There was a bridal veil in her trunk and a wedding-cake in an airtight tin, the provision of which now somehow seemed ridiculous.

"Of course it will make no difference," she said apathetically.

It cheered her to find that Mr. Rock was a much more likeable person than she had expected to meet. The first question he asked her was not whether she had had a pleasant journey, or what she thought of Central Africa, but as to the results of the last Test Match. And then he paid her the highest compliment he could have paid her.

"Are you *the* Miss Winifred Neville?" he asked.

"I am the only one I know," answered Winifred modestly.

"I mean the Greek scholar. I hope you are. As you may suppose, an important part of my job is properly to understand the local native language, but it's a bit out of my depth sometimes. It's amazingly complex. At the cost of much brain-fag I have more or less mastered the fact that the verbs have five moods and about thirteen tenses, and that if one wants to speak it grammatically one must learn nearly a hundred per-

sonal pronouns, because the pronoun must agree with the verb in tense and with the subject in declension. In future I shall bring to you all the problems that floor me."

Winifred's vision of the future turned a shade less sombre. Even although Peter had long since forgotten the difference between a dactyl and a spondee she would at least have a neighbour with whom she could discuss suffixes and paradigms and thus keep her mind from rusting. She might even enhance her reputation instead of losing it, for as a student of Homer she had been but one among many scholars, but if, with Mr. Rock's help in the initial stages, she were to compile a grammar of the Wanazoa language, she might carve for herself a pinnacle of fame that none could share with her.

But it was an awkward meal to which the three sat down. Five years among a subject people with whom he had to speak an alien tongue had enfolded Peter in the silence that falls on those who live much alone. He had lost the gift he had once had for light-hearted chatter about nothing in particular, and when he spoke it was as if he carefully chose his words and arranged them in order before he uttered them. Winifred feared to talk, for the subject uppermost in her mind was her dread of the future—not a fit topic for one who is about to be a bride. Her mind, too, was engaged with a fight to overcome her repugnance against eating from a plate that had been handed her by a black man. She believed she would have minded it less if it had been a black woman, but the women of the country, Lady Stark had told her, were too hopelessly careless and stupid to be employed in any kind of housework.

Perhaps because he felt the tension, or perhaps because it was a treat to him to talk to someone fresh of his own race, the missionary talked enough for three.

"One of the great attractions of this under-rated country is that one can afford to live so luxuriously," he said, as he helped himself to roast chicken. "At home this delectable dish appears on one's table only on more or less festive occasions. Here one eats it daily, twice a day, every day, in fact, except when circumstances justify the slaughter of a goat. It is true that groceries are expensive because that brigand, Brazen-bridge, charges freight at the rate of a hundred pounds a ton for everything that the *Lady of the Lake* brings us, but even that cloud has a silver lining. With five

shillings to pay on top of the cost price for every pound weight of European foodstuff we buy, the difference in price between tinned bloaters and tinned caviar, or between tinned carrots and tinned asparagus, becomes negligible—therefore one can afford to eat caviar and asparagus. At home one takes one's best clothes out of the wardrobe only on state occasions. If one left them in a wardrobe in this country, the white ants would very soon eat them, so one wears them daily. And with wages at three shillings a month one can afford to have a whole staff of servants who never fail to supply us with chatty little anecdotes to put in our home letters. The other day my house-boy offered me a plate of goat chops. He had neglected to provide a fork, so I asked if I was to help myself with my fingers. 'No, sir, you'll burn them,' he said, and helped me with his own! You must come into court this afternoon, Miss Neville. You will witness a scene that would make a Gilbert and Sullivan play seem matter of fact in comparison, and it will give you enough material to fill your home letters for a month."

"I'm afraid she won't understand much of what is going on," said Peter.

"I'll act as showman," said Mr. Rock. "The little bit of noise that my talking will make won't make any difference in the general babel."

When the meal was over they moved from the hut in which they had eaten it to another that Darrell used for his sitting-room. He exhibited a book-case, made with his own hands, slung by cords from a rafter to preserve its contents from the appetites of white ants, and a device he had invented to keep black ants from climbing up the legs of his table. He showed, coiled in the thatch, a non-poisonous snake, of a kind that the natives believe harbour the spirit of their ancestors, that he had brought in from the bush and tamed to keep the hut free from mice. But especially he called Winifred's attention to a tapestry-upholstered arm-chair, with adjustable back and book-rest attached, newly unpacked from the case in which it had arrived from London, that he said she was to consider as her own especial property. Winifred tried to express her gratitude suitably, but to her eyes this luxurious piece of furniture, standing on an earthen floor carpeted with zebra hides, by the side of a table on which the words "STOW AWAY FROM BOILERS" showed through the varnish, seemed clamorously to

call attention to the general uncouthness of its surroundings. She was glad when they were interrupted by a sergeant of the King's African Rifles, who came to the door, saluted, and said that the *bwalo* was ready.

Winifred had inferred from Peter's letters that he was a person of importance in the eyes of his Wanazoa subjects, but she was unprepared for the homage that greeted him as he took his seat on the dais. Between three and four hundred natives who had been squatting on the ground sprang up and wiped their feet in the dust, as one wipes one's boots on a doormat. Then they clapped their hands for a full minute, and as they squatted down they shouted, "*Baba*," "*Injobvunkulu*," "*Mavuta*."

"Grandfather, Great Elephant, Fat One," translated Mr. Rock. "They are epithets, meant of course to be complimentary, addressed only to paramount chiefs and swells of that sort. Do you see that Darrell acknowledges the salute by patting his ribs with his left hand? The idea is that so great a chief as he is cannot clap both hands, because he should have a spear or a sceptre or something in his right hand. You see those men leading goats up to the dais for his august approval: those are the litigants paying their fees into court. If I were he, I should refuse that venerable old billy, and make the man exchange it for eggs or something more edible. You will live largely on live stock paid as fees or fines, and Darrell, if he is honest, will render an account of it to the Megobaniland Treasury, so that the value of it at current market rates can be deducted from his screw. If the man with the old billy-goat doesn't look out, he will give occasion for 'laughter in court.'"

The goat, bleating loudly, was objecting so strongly to its part in the proceedings, that its owner gave up trying to lead it, and called to a friend to help push it up to the dais. Thinking itself free, it leapt forward, snapped its rope halter, cleared a group of squatting men at one bound, and with lowered horns scattered the crowd and disappeared from view, hotly pursued by the owner, the owner's friends, and all the dogs that had the good luck to be present. Those who did not join in the hunt stood up and yelled impractical advice. "Silence in the *bwalo*," shouted the sergeant. "Silence!" shouted all the other Riflemen. The cry was taken up and every individual present, except the three on the dais, bawled to the crowd in general an order to sit down and pay attention. The din died down

when the Riflemen, armed with long canes, rapped the heads of the noisiest, but it was momentarily revived when a small boy, from the shelter of his mother's arms, squeaked out, "Be silent, people," and a hundred voices were lifted to rebuke him. Even when order was restored as far as it was possible to restore it, Darrell had to raise his voice above a continuous murmur of talk.

"Doesn't it suggest the Court of Calamity Pop von Peppermint Drop, the King of Canoodledum?" said the missionary. "Now you can understand the sort of thing I have to put up with when I am trying to give a Scripture lesson."

Winifred was an orphan who had never had brothers or sisters. Having never been a boarder in a girls' school, she had never learned the joys of ragging. In the house of her uncle, a celibate Canon of Ilchester, she had come into close contact with the elderly church dignitaries and scholars who were his friends. The peace of the old cathedral close that had been her home had permeated her spirit. The noise and uncouthness of this crowd of savages jarred on every nerve, but for Peter's sake she tried to pretend an interest in the scene.

"What is the lawsuit about?" she asked.

"The one I am concerned in comes later. This one is about hunting rights. By Wanazoa law most of the meat of a buck that is killed belongs to whoever of a hunting party first wounds it, but the man who gives it its death-blow, and the chief of the particular territory in which it is killed, are entitled to a share. In this case a chief is claiming compensation for a fore-quarter that he did not receive, and the defence—quite a valid one from the native point of view—is that last year one of his people stole a goat from the defendant's nephew."

"But does Peter know all their laws?"

"He has a sort of general hang of them. When in doubt he consults the chiefs. Those are the chiefs—the old boys squatting in the front row. There'll be trouble directly. The man who is giving evidence now is palpably lying like a hatter."

Winifred might almost have guessed it from the demeanour of the crowd. Most of them were grinning broadly as if in admiration of the witness's cleverness, but others—probably the defendant's friends—were shuffling restlessly and muttering indignantly. Darrell was leaning forward in his chair snapping short, sharp questions, and the witness, avoiding his eye, was

showing his embarrassment by scratching his shin with his toe-nails. Darrell made a sign. Two of the Riflemen took the witness by wrist and ankle and stretched him face downwards on the ground. The sergeant took from a shelf below the dais a heavy whip of hippopotamus hide. He swung it above his head, but Darrell checked him and ordered him to take the witness outside the court.

"You must excuse me a minute, Winifred," he said. "This man has got to be flogged and I must go and see it done."

"Why must he see it done?" asked Winifred indignantly, wincing at the dull sound of a blow followed by a piercing scream. "Is it because he is afraid that the sergeant won't flog his fellow-countryman hard enough?"

"He is afraid he may flog him too hard if he is not present to restrain him. Cruelty for cruelty's sake is ingrained in these people—even in the best of them."

"But surely flogging with a whip like that is too severe a punishment. In England——"

"This is not England. These people see no shame in lying—only in being so stupid as to be detected in a lie. Darrell must deal with it severely or he would never be able to arrive at the truth in a case that is brought to him for trial. He can't rule these people with gloved hands. But his rule is mild compared with the reign of terror he supplanted. You see that old man taking snuff? He is Matipa, the paramount chief. When he ruled he used to torture to death any man who lied in his *bwalo*—not for lying, but for insulting his intelligence by trying to deceive him. He put to death any man who, when meeting him, did not shout his praises extravagantly enough, any man who did not clap his hands if he happened to sneeze, even any man who accidentally stepped across his shadow. If by the end of any day he had found no excuse for killing a man, he killed one without excuse for sheer love of bloodshed. The people were his dogs, he used to say, to do with as he would. The soil of his *bwalo* was permanently black with dried human blood, and every post in the stockade of his *boma* had a human skull on it."

Winifred shuddered.

"And these are the people I have come to live among!"

"These are the people," replied the missionary, "whom Darrell is striving to lift

out of the mire of their own brutal lusts."

Darrell's lips were twitching as he returned to his seat—he never witnessed a flogging without feeling physically sick—but the flogging had good results. The perjured witness, blood oozing through his dirty loin-cloth, now gave his evidence so satisfactorily that the case was quickly settled and the one that concerned Mr. Rock was called.

A man, more fully dressed and in a cleaner

"This is a sort of test case," he explained to Winifred, when he sat down again. "Darrell has to deal with a problem that has not arisen before among these people. Throughout Megobaniland a native Christian is exempt from tribal law, because in some matters tribal law demands what a Christian could not conscientiously perform. By Wanazoa law a man has to buy his wife from her father. A Christian would not, but this convert of mine married a pagan



"Peter sat on the cliff's edge and watched the canoe till it was lost in the glare of the sunset-lit water. Still he did not move."

cloth than most of those present, came to the front of the crowd. Then the missionary stood up and faced Darrell.

"This man is David Sukmbali," he testified. "He is a native of the Baseni people. I baptised him as a Believer five years ago, since when he has been in my service, coming with me when I came among the Wanazoa. Two months ago he brought a woman who is not a Believer to me, saying that he wished to marry her. He said that she was an orphan. I married them, but I have since learned that he lied, for her father is alive."

woman. I consented to perform the ceremony because, as he said she was an orphan, I thought that the question of her father's consent did not arise."

"But are women bought and sold like slaves? I thought that under British rule —"

"It isn't the same thing as slavery. I shouldn't have used the word 'buy.' The price that a man pays for his wife is compensation to the father for the loss of his daughter's services. It is just that he should pay it, for women do most of the

hard work, practically all of the work in the fields."

A fat old man stepped forward and pleaded in a cajoling whine that he was old, and poor, and hungry, that his wives were old, and consequently, now that his daughter had left him, he would have to hire labour to help them with the hoeing of the fields. The facts of the case not being disputed, Darrell announced his decision.

"Listen, people," he said. "It is the order of the Great White King that a Believer should not be made to obey the orders of a chief who is not a Believer. But if I give my order that a Believer who wishes to marry a woman who is not a Believer should be free from the payment of *lobola* to her father, according to your custom, then would all of you who are too lazy to work to earn the price of a wife, run to the Teacher who is here in court asking to be made Believers, not because they wish to believe, but because they wish to get a wife for nothing. Therefore I give my order that this Believer is to pay for his wife according to your custom. It remains to decide on the price. Let the woman come forward so that the chiefs may give me their counsel."

A girl, giggling bashfully, rose and, amid a storm of jests that Mr. Rock did not see fit to translate to Winifred, shambled awkwardly into the space in front of the dais. The chiefs, after a few inquiries as to her father's social position, felt the muscles of her arms to judge whether she could wield a hoe vigorously, and of her neck to see if she was inured to the carrying of heavy weights. They then expressed the opinion that she was a good worker, worth at least four cows.

"Let it be so," said Darrell. "It is my order that David Sukmbali is to pay four cows for his wife, or as much brass wire as will purchase four cows. I have spoken. The *mlandu* is finished."

As they left the court together, Winifred shrunk away from Peter's side and placed herself on the missionary's left, so that he was obliged to walk between them. Rock saw that her eyes were blazing and her lips trembling.

"I'm afraid that you are shocked at seeing the chiefs prod that woman with their fingers," he said. "When one builds a house, one starts with the foundations. Respect for human life is the first stone that Darrell must lay; respect for women must come later. In fact, that is more my job than

his. He must govern as far as he can in accordance with native laws and customs. In Central Africa one has to learn not to put too much value on matters of minor importance. When I first started my work I used to make my converts wear European clothes, because I did not distinguish between trousers and Christianity. I have since learned that the indiscriminate imitation by the natives of our customs, is not always a wholesome form of flattery. I think Darrell's servant has some tea ready for us."

Chiteema was a servant who was absolutely faithful to his master in what he considered essential matters. The fact that Darrell had once saved his life and that he firmly believed that he had saved Darrell from death by witchcraft, was a strong bond between them. But it was not in him to be faithful in little things. In spite of many rebukes, for example, he never remembered to keep a supply of water in the kitchen. It so happened—great issues sometimes hang on very slender threads indeed—that to-day he had used all the water he had available to make tea. Consequently, when Darrell told him to wash again a cup that showed his thumb-mark too clearly, he could not obey the order without delay unless he adopted an expedient against which he knew that his master had an inexplicable prejudice. He took the cup, and as soon as he was out of Darrell's sight—that he could be seen from where Winifred sat he probably considered did not matter—spat in it, polished it with his loin-cloth, and brought it back again.

Winifred did see him. Her disgust came as a climax to all that had occurred that day to distress her. All the misgivings she had felt as to her future, all her repugnance to the uncouthness and squalor she saw around her, all her horror of the stark loneliness of the land to which she had come, surged back in a flood. Tears filled her eyes. She felt that unless she could find some place where she could be alone, she must break down. Without trusting herself to speak, she hurried out of the hut, past a gardener who was uncovering the flower-beds to let the evening dew reach them, through the deserted *bualo*, down the winding path to the lake-shore. She had five precious minutes of solitude before Peter found her.

"I know what upset you," he said. "Rock saw what happened. These fellows need an awful lot of training, but now that you are here——"

Winifred put her hands on his shoulders. "Take me home, Peter," she pleaded. "I could never be anything but miserable in this dreadful country. We could be so happy at home. You need not hesitate about giving up your appointment. I have money of my own—enough for both of us. And you need not be idle. You could be useful there—on the Urban District Council—or the Board of Guardians—in heaps of ways."

The irresponsible boy to whom Winifred had given her heart had had so high a respect for her superior intellect that he had yielded to her judgment in all things. But this Peter was very different from the Peter of those days. He shook his head gravely.

"My work is here," he said.

"But don't you realise how your work is brutalising you? You discuss a woman's cash value as if she were a prize beast at a cattle show. You stand unmoved and watch a poor wretch being flogged. Such a life as you lead is bound to make you coarse and——"

"It isn't of myself that I have to think. I began the work here. Stark has no one he could send to take my place. That is why I could not take the leave that is officially due to me so as to come home and marry you. Even if Stark had someone to take my place, I don't believe the Wanazoa would trust anyone else as they trust me. I can't leave my work unfinished."

Winifred drew a ring from her finger and handed it to him.

"If you care for your work more than you care for me," she said bitterly, "there

is nothing more to be said. I suppose Mr. Rock will let me stay at the mission station with his wife until the launch comes to this end of the lake again. Please tell him that I will wait here till he is ready for me."

* * * * *

Peter sat on the cliff's edge and watched the canoe till it was lost in the glare of the sunset-lit water. Still he did not move. A family of monkeys in the tree above his head scuffled for the best sleeping-places, scolded awhile and were silent. Deep silence brooded over the *boma* behind him, for all the Riflemen, except the sentry on duty, had gone off to the nearest village to smoke and gossip. Darrell did not want to go back to the cluster of huts that were his quarters. He feared the loneliness of them. They had never seemed lonely before, because he had always been able mentally to picture Winnie among them. But they would seem lonely to-night, for that picture would never come back to him.

Chiteema found him and told him that his evening meal was ready. He said he would come. But he did not go into the hut where it was laid. He passed through the garden that Winnie was never to see in its rainy-season glory and went into the other, and sat there—with bowed head—staring at an empty chair.

Chiteema was a happy man that night. When he went to clear away his master's evening meal, he found it untouched. He did not object to its being cold and clammy, for an appetite that is prepared, at a moment's notice, to consume double rations, takes no heed of such trifles.

A further episode in the career of Peter Darrell will appear in the next number.

BEES IN THE BROOM.

ACRES of bold, yellow gold
Spreading from valley to crest,
Shoulder-high sunshine unrolled—
Uplands in cloth-of-gold dressed.

Rapturous, eager, intent,
Myriads of busy wings boom.
Industry's instinct has sent
Millions of bees to the broom.

Skylarks by scores in the sky—
Acres of sun-hot perfume—
Treasures no money can buy.

So come, like the bee, to the broom !

JESSIE POPE.



"As they stood side by side, he put his arm round her shoulder, 'Darling?' 'Yes, love?' 'I wonder if you know how jealous I once was of that poor chap?' She laughed. 'Who was the lady?' 'Who d'you think, eh?'"

A BREAKER OF HEARTS

By MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLER

"IT'S so nice—no, not nice, delicious!—to have you here again, Ella. James and I were saying so just now to one another——"

The Duke, the Duchess, and Ella Carleton, a friend of long ago, were sitting on the terrace after luncheon. Miss Carleton had arrived at the Castle two days before, but the Duke had only that morning come home, so he had hardly seen her.

"Your being with us again seems to roll back the years," the Duchess went on in

a feeling voice. Then, more lightly, she added, "And makes *me* feel quite ridiculously young again!"

Ella Carleton smiled; but it was such a sad, wistful smile that the Duke told himself that his dear Laura had not been very happily inspired as to that last remark of hers. The Duchess still looked young, in a sense surprisingly young, considering that, unlike the majority of her contemporaries, she made no effort to improve nature with the aid of rouge and lipstick. But the

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other woman looked like the wraith of the lovely girl who had been the Duchess's closest friend before her marriage.

In those far-off days Ella Carleton's abundant hair had been of that rare and exquisite tint which the French call *blond cendré*, and she had possessed the delicate rose-leaf complexion which sometimes, not always, goes with that sunny-tinted hair. True, her face still retained its perfect oval, and her blue eyes, if dimmed and tired-looking, were still beautiful. But she now had that indefinable, and in a woman, piteous, look, which can only be described as faded.

The Duke was not a very perceptive man, and he was not given to taking much notice of either people or things that did not concern him nearly. But now there did well up in his heart a feeling of sincere pity for one whose life, at the time he had first known her, had seemed likely to be happier than that falling to the lot of most mortals. She had been the cherished only daughter of a couple who, though not rich, had been in the position to give her many social advantages at that time still denied to the merely wealthy.

As he looked reflectively at his guest, Ella Carleton's host began to recall certain facts concerning her early life. He even remembered, vaguely, that the listless, delicate-looking woman now sitting by his wife's side could more than once have made a brilliant marriage. But her father had died when she was three-and-twenty, and her mother had had a long, lingering, most painful, illness, during the course of which Mrs. Carleton had, all unconsciously, acted with terrible selfishness, scarcely bearing her daughter out of her sight.

After the death of her mother, Ella, then being about thirty, had begun a wandering life, never going far from the beaten track, for such was not her nature, but spending more and more time away from England, till at last she had settled down for life, or so it seemed, in Italy. The outbreak of war had driven her home, and hard war-work had taken away the remnant of youth left to her. Then had come what had seemed a call to keep home for her childless widower brother in South America. But after two years he had died, leaving her lonely indeed.

Now she was back in England for good, throwing herself, with what energy was left to her, into the Girl Guide movement. This was somewhat curious, for Miss

Carleton was gentle, abstracted in manner, and very fragile in appearance.

The Duke broke the long—he felt it the almost painful—silence, by saying suddenly, "Whom do you think I knocked up against yesterday afternoon, Laura?" And as, smiling, she shook her head, he went on, "Beau Saberer!"

A little to his surprise, the colour flew into his wife's face. "I thought he'd given up going anywhere," she observed. "Where did you meet him?"

"I was walking across the Green Park, and there was the poor chap sitting on a bench while some evening paper was being read aloud to him by a man-servant whom I remembered as his batman in the war. I spoke to him, of course, and I could see he was really glad to see me, so I sat down, and we had quite a long pow-wow. From what he let out I could see that he leads a queerly solitary life. But he kept his end up. He was always a plucky chap. All the same, there was a kind of——"

He hesitated, and the Duchess supplied the words—"aftermath of bitterness? Oh, James, how well I can understand that."

"So can I. When one thinks of what he was like when we were all young together—— How I used to envy him!"

"He was a good bit older than you," observed the Duchess.

"When one's twenty-three, one longs to be twenty-nine," said the Duke sententially. "And Beau doesn't look old, even now."

"Has Sir John Saberer been ill?" Miss Carleton asked the question in a quiet, toneless voice.

The Duke turned to her quickly. "Not that I know of. In fact, save that his hair's gone white, he's as good-looking as ever, and very much 'the beau' too—in fact, he dresses a thought too smartly for to-day! But of course he can't see what other men look like, poor chap."

"Has he gone blind?" The question was uttered in a tone of shocked dismay, and it was the Duchess who answered her friend.

"Surely you know what happened to Beau Saberer in the war, Ella?" And as the other shook her head: "He did really splendidly, and though I believe he was recklessly, foolishly, brave, he escaped without a scratch during the three years he was out in France, till two days before the Armistice. By that time he was a General, and on that 9th of November,

1918, he and his staff were caught, ever so far behind the line, while sitting at mess, by a bomb dropped from an aeroplane! His best friend—you remember Jack Robey?—was killed by his side, and Beau himself was blinded, though, oddly enough, his looks, or so they say, weren't a bit affected."

The colour rushed into Ella Carleton's face, and for a moment, so the Duke told himself, she looked quite young.

"What a horrible, horrible thing!" she murmured.

And then she lifted her right hand to her face, and put it over her eyes, as if to shut out a terrible sight. With a sudden movement, she got up: "I think I ought to go upstairs and write some letters before tea, Laura. After I've had my lovely rest here, with you, I hope to be well enough to go with some of my guides to a country camp in September."

For a few moments the two left alone together remained silent, then the Duke exclaimed: "To tell you the truth, Laura, I half invited that poor chap to come down here, for this next week-end. I told him we should be practically alone, and I could see he was overjoyed at the idea. I'm ashamed I never thought of asking him to stay with us before, but he's so dropped out—"

She did not answer at once, so, "Have you any reason for not wanting Beau Saberer to come here?" he asked, surprised.

Again she waited, but this time only a fraction of a second. "Of course not! I shall be very glad to see poor Beau again. I'd better send him a wire."

She got up, and he got up too. As they stood side by side, he put his arm round her shoulder, "Darling?"

"Yes, love?"

"I wonder if you know how jealous I once was of that poor chap?"

She laughed. "Who was the lady?"

He pinched her ear. "Who d'you think, eh?"

"Not me, James?"

"Come! Don't pretend! What a long, long time ago it all seems, eh, Laura?"

"It does indeed," she said sincerely.

"D'you remember a late July evening when you and I and Beau drove down to Ranelagh? Beau had his private hansom, and I'd chartered one to take us down. I can't remember who was the other girl—?"

"It was Ella Carleton," interjected the Duchess quietly.

"By Jove—so it was! I'd quite forgotten that. All I remember is that Beau Saberer, when we started to go home, by some sleight of hand—you know how clever he was at that sort of thing?—got you, while I was left, very much left, with the other girl!"

"I remember that night too, and how surprised and disappointed I was—"

"Surprised, but not disappointed. No, darling, you were not disappointed! Be honest."

"I am honest," she protested. "I really was disappointed."

Under her breath she whispered, "And so was Ella." But the Duke did not hear those four little words.

"I *was* in a rage!" he laughed aloud. "I'm afraid Ella must have thought me a regular bear. And what 'put the lid on,' as your son Algy would say, was that though the two cabs were supposed to keep together, Beau's hansom soon vanished in the dusty distance."

"Of course it did!"

And now she, too, broke into a peal of laughter. "I remember that evening as if it was yesterday, James. Beau had a taking way with him, hadn't he?"

"I should think he had! There were a good many young chaps who'd have given years of their life to change places with Beau Saberer."

"I suppose every man secretly longs to be a breaker of hearts? D'you remember old Pam's answer, when someone asked him why he made love to every woman he met?"

"What did he say?"

"That he liked to give every woman a chance!"

"Confess that Beau did make love to you, Laura? I've never asked you that before—"

She smiled a little wryly. "Of course he did. And perhaps it was lucky for me that I'd taken a liking to you, dearest, before Beau turned his—ahem!—serious attention to me."

"Did it go as far as that?"

"It did." She said the two little words in a grave tone; and in the same tone she went on: "He was fearfully extravagant, always on the edge of a smash, and I swam into his ken when he had about come to the end of his tether. I was *such* a goldfish you see, James. No wonder poor Beau was tempted. You were the only one of my 'followers' who never seemed to remember that I was a great heiress."

He tightened his grip of her. "What nonsense!"

"No, not nonsense. Horrid, plain, unvarnished truth. Beau didn't really like me—not one little bit. He cared for someone very different from me, a girl who was not only lovely, but good, unselfish—an angel, in fact."

"Did I know her?"

"Let me see?" The Duchess waited a moment. "I think you did. But it wouldn't be fair now to tell you who she was——"

"What happened?"

"Nothing happened. Beau only broke her heart."

She had slipped away from his encircling arm, and there was a troubled, condemning look on her face.

"Whatever Beau Saberer's sins of commission——"

"And omission——"

"—he has been well punished," the Duke ended his sentence.

"But what an innings he had first!" she exclaimed.

"He said two things yesterday afternoon that would have touched even your hard heart."

"What were they?"

"One, that he was now in a land that knew not Joseph——"

"And the other?"

"That he had never realised till now the truth of the saying, 'A bachelor lives like a king, and dies like a dog.'"

"I don't see why he shouldn't marry, even now," said the Duchess thoughtfully.

He smiled quizzically. "You're an incorrigible matchmaker, Laura."

More seriously, he added: "I can't imagine a more melancholy fate for any girl, however plain and stupid she may be, than to marry a man of nearly sixty who is not only blind, but who has outlived everything that he thinks makes life worth living, and who feels like Rip Van Winkle."

"I don't want him to marry a girl," observed the Duchess a little crossly, "still less anyone plain and stupid, James."

"I don't say you might find him a widow, especially among his old loves, who'd be willing to take him. You might have a try when you go up to town in November. Meanwhile, will you send him a wire?"

"Of course I will—and write him a line too. But first I must go and see Parsleet, for the dear old thing's not well. It's the first

time I've ever known her take to her bed."

"What fun, to say nothing of the high life, they must be having below stairs!" exclaimed the Duke.

II.

THE Duchess had sent a herald, in the person of the head housemaid, to inform Mrs. Parsleet who was coming to see her. So the old lady had had plenty of time to make herself, as she had expressed it, "fit to be seen by her Grace." This had taken the form of swathing her thin, pale face, in a seventy-year-old cream-tinted net veil, and placing round her shrunken shoulders a Chuddah shawl, which she had been wont to wrap about her dear nursing a matter of forty odd years ago.

There came a gentle knock on the door; it opened, and the Duchess walked in. "I'm so sorry you're not well, dear Parsy. I've brought you a few roses."

Mrs. Parsleet had always been a strong woman, and during her many years at the Castle she had never taken to her bed till two days ago, so the Duchess had never been in this room before, and she looked round her with some curiosity.

What an austere, plainly furnished room, and how entirely lacking in any of the prettinesses of life! Not one of the women servants who were "under her," in that great house, had liked the housekeeper sufficiently well to bring her up a bunch of flowers, and that though the gardens round the Castle were now a riot of splendid bloom and colour.

Above the mantelpiece, painted to look like yellow veined marble, on which there stood a travelling clock—a singularly incongruous gift presented by the Duke to Mrs. Parsleet soon after his marriage to her "young lady," hung a dozen or more framed photographs of the Duchess, from those taken in infancy onwards.

The two high, narrow windows of the bedroom looked to the north, and that, to be sure, was quite a pleasant feature just now, as it was very hot weather. But quickly the old housekeeper's mistress told herself that by next winter "Parsy" should be moved to a warm, sunny room, on the other side of the Castle.

As the Duchess's glance travelled back to the painted iron and brass bed, she saw that on a small square mahogany-topped table, within reach of the invalid's hand, there lay three books—Taylor's *Holy Living and Dying*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and a Bible.

The sight of these three volumes brought a rush of childish memories to Mrs. Parsleet's visitor. They had always been kept by "Parsy's" bed in the night-nursery, and out of that weather-beaten-looking Bible "Parsy's" little charge, from the age of six onwards, had read each day "her chapter."

The Duchess told herself, with a sudden tightening of the throat, how very much this old woman, albeit unknowingly, had influenced her life for good. Jane Parsleet had not been what is called a pleasant person, but she always had a very strong sense of duty, and she had never allowed her passionate love of the child to whom she really stood in the place of mother, as well as of nurse, to interfere with what she believed it to be right to say or do.

That child, now a mother herself, realised what the cost of such speech and action must have been, now and again, to the still indomitable old woman who was lying there before her, looking, oh! so pale and weak.

The Duchess pulled the one upright, uncomfortable, armchair the room contained a little closer to the bed. It had been placed, by Mrs. Parsleet's orders, at what she considered a proper distance from herself.

"Please don't come so near, your Grace. I've got what's called a summer cold. 'Twould put me about ever so, if you was to catch it!"

"I shan't catch your cold," said the Duchess quietly. "Besides, if you had smallpox, Parsy, I should come and look after you—of course I should! I should be an ungrateful wretch if I didn't——"

"Your Grace 'ud be a very foolish lady if you did such a thing as that!"

But Mrs. Parsleet's face lighted up, as she uttered the reproof. Then she said suddenly: "I hopes as I'll be up and about afore Miss Carleton leaves the Castle. I'd like to see her again, that I would, if she wouldn't mind, that is. She was such a gentle, meek, sweet young lady——"

"Not a bit like me, eh, Parsy?"

Mrs. Parsleet chuckled feebly: "I used to think when you two was together that a bit of her meekness, and a bit of your spirit mixed up together, wouldn't 'a' done either your Grace or Miss Ella any harm."

Then the Duchess said something that some people would have thought irrelevant, but Mrs. Parsleet, old as she was, made no such mistake.

"D'you remember Captain Saberer, Parsy?"

The old woman straightened herself. There came a light—was it of battle?—in her dim eyes. "I'm not likely ever to forget *him*. The Captain gave me trouble enough—that he did! Never could I see what the ladies saw in him, a regular popinjay, that's what he was, and I weren't the only one to say so."

"You thought I liked him, Parsy; but you were quite wrong, and I do hope you'll believe me, when I tell you so *now*?"

Mrs. Parsleet looked deprecatingly at the Duchess.

"I was afraid you might get to like him, dearie. Many a young lady begins by not liking a young gentleman, and concludes by liking him too much"—and she dolefully shook her old head. "The Captain followed you close, that he did, and I was sore afraid that it was her fine fortune, and not my precious lamb herself, that he was after."

The Duchess smiled just a little ruefully. "You were right there, Parsy. And now that we're both getting on," she rose and, coming close up to the side of the bed, she looked down into the now upturned face of her old nurse, "I'll tell you something I've never told anyone in the world!"

"And what may that be?"

"I once made Beau Saberer confess—well, to put it plainly, I forced him to admit that he only wanted to marry me because of my money."

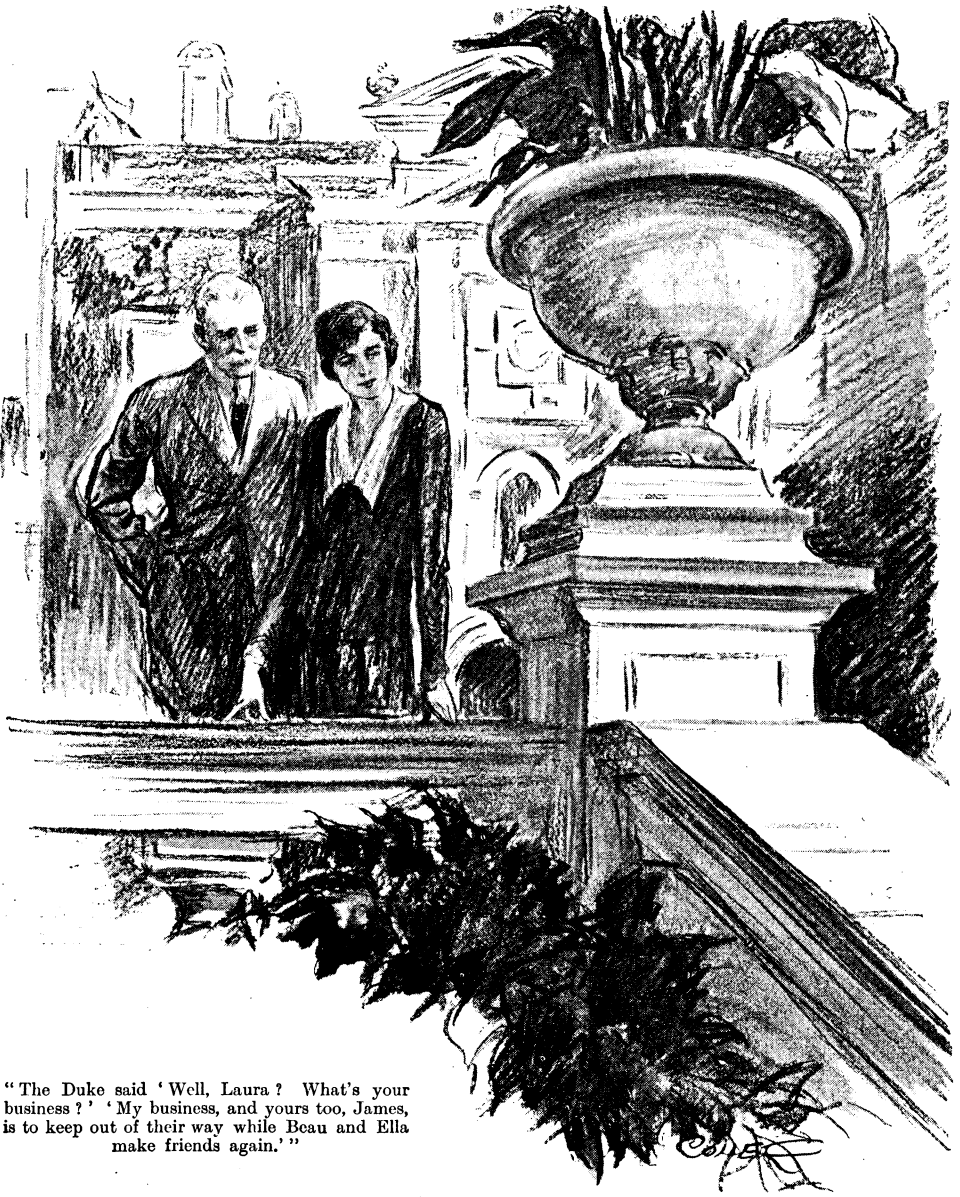
"You never did!"

"I did, indeed—and he took it very well. But he didn't deny it."

"Then he did ask your Grace to marry him?" exclaimed Mrs. Parsleet excitedly. "I often wondered if he'd dared to do that——"

The Duchess shook her head. "I stopped him just in time! I said I was afraid he was thinking of marrying for money, and that, as we were friends, I hated thinking that of him. Men are more honest than women, Parsy, for, as I told you just now, he didn't deny it, and—and he never did ask me to marry him."

"The young lady he ought to 'a' married," said Mrs. Parsleet slowly, "was sweet Miss Ella. He did love her, though he was hateful in not showing it when there was any other body by. He was a crafty one—the Captain was. But there! Some do say that out of evil now and again good do come, and I mind that his Grace was very much upset by Captain Saberer's attentions with regard



"The Duke said 'Well, Laura? What's your business?' 'My business, and yours too, James, is to keep out of their way while Beau and Ella make friends again.'"

to your Grace—I mean, of course, afore your Grace was your Grace. Peeping over the banisters of our house one afternoon, I once saw them scowling at one another something awful, just as his Grace was going out, and Captain Bo, as he was then called, I never could make out just why, was coming in to tea, conquering-like. I *was* pleased to see the look his Grace cast on the Captain—that I was."

The Duchess laughed aloud. "You cruel old thing! But you're right, Parsy. I'm afraid the Duke was jealous, at one time, of poor Beau Saberer."

Mrs. Parsleet shut her eyes for a moment.

"Though it was all such a long, long time ago," she said reflectively: "I mind one evening when your Grace didn't come home till near one o'clock in the morning, and you was with the Captain, as well I knew. Oh dear, oh dear! I shudders now when I remembers that night. I thought there'd been a haccident, also I didn't know what your papa 'ud say if he came in afore you did."

"You mean a night," exclaimed the Duchess, "when the Duke and I, with Captain Saberer and Miss Carleton, dined at Ranelagh?"

"Ay, that's where you was! You'd said

to me faithful, that you'd be back afore twelve o'clock. And when you was a young lady your Grace did keep your word,—as a rule, that is."

"You *were* in a paddy that night, Parsy—even I can remember that!"

"And I wasn't made hany the happier when your Grace hexplained the reason of your being so shockin' late."

"What was the reason?" asked the Duchess, feeling just a little hypocritical, for, as a matter of fact, she could remember the reason quite well.

"The reason, dearie, was that you'd been driving round and round the Regent's Park, and in a hansom-cab too, with that very villain. You told me as how he'd shouted hup, through the nasty little trap-door in the roof, 'Drive round and round till the horse drops dead!'—a very



"The one-time lovers had walked off together, she guiding him down the steep steps leading to the gardens below."

unfeeling thing for a gentleman to order about a poor quadruped has had served him faithful."

"That was only his fun, Parsy. Of course, I knew that!"

"Fun, indeed? It's as true as I'm lying in this bed that when that hansom-cab did stop afore our house the poor horse was all of a lather——"

"That was my fault! When I found how late it was I made Beau rush me home."

"Ho dear! How well I remembers that night! There I was, in the hall, waitin', waitin', waitin'. And when you did come in at last the Captain says, says he, as bold as brass, 'I've brought your young lady safe back. You could trust her with me anywhere, Mrs. Parsleet.' And after my fine gentleman had driven off, you laughed and laughed, hysterical-like, and I thought to myself, 'What is going to happen? Is my precious lamb going to take *that* rip?'"

"Beau Saberer wasn't a rip," said the Duchess thoughtfully, "not a real rip. I think I'd have liked him better if he had been."

"I oughtn't to have been afraid, for well I know your Grace would never have parted him from the young lady as *did* love him."

The Duchess went and sat down again in the hard armchair.

"Then you, too, knew that she loved him, Parsy?"

"A body hadn't to be very sharp to know that," said the old woman quietly.

The Duchess sighed. "My heart aches to-day—thinking of those old days."

"And I could 'a' told Miss Ella that the Captain wasn't worth a haporth of love," went on Mrs. Parsleet ruthlessly. "If I'd been her old nurse I would 'a' told her so. But there! It wasn't my place to do that."

"If you'd told her so a thousand times, she wouldn't have believed it," said the Duchess mournfully.

"I don't suppose she would, for she was set on him, and very bad indeed did he act by her, poor young lady."

"But we must think kindly of him now, Parsy?"

Mrs. Parsleet shook her head, "That I never will!"

"He's a sad, lonely, blind man, and I'm asking him to come here on Friday for a few days. I hope we shall persuade him to stay on till his Grace goes to Scotland."

And then the old woman startled her nursling. Fixing her dim eyes on the Duchess, she said suddenly: "Your Grace

isn't thinking of making up a match between him and Miss Carleton? The time's passed by for that."

"I wonder if it is, Parsy? He was very, very fond of her, you know—the better side of him did really love her."

"That side didn't remain uppermost, your Grace. To my thinking, if Miss Carleton's any sperrit left she wouldn't look at him."

"It's difficult for a woman to show any spirit if she cares for a man."

"Then let's hope she don't care for him any more. 'Twould be very poor-sperrited of Miss Carleton to take him now—after all that's come and gone."

"I dare say you're right, Parsy. No doubt they've quite forgotten each other by now."

"Few is as faithful-hearted as your Grace," said the old woman fondly.

And then she added with a funny little smile: "And if I may be so bold as to say so, few is as romantical."

A few moments later the Duchess was walking down a corridor which ended in two delightful rooms, a bedroom and a sitting-room, which had been occupied in turn by her three elder, and now married, daughters. The little suite formed part of what in the Castle were called "the family rooms," and no visitor was ever put there. But when the Duchess had asked Ella Carleton to stay with her for all August, she had told herself that, as Ella was delicate, it would be nice for her to have a pleasant, cool sitting-room, opening out of her bedroom.

She was on her way to that sitting-room now, for she felt that she must tell her friend of Sir John Saberer's coming visit, before she had actually sent him the telegram containing her invitation. Mrs. Parsleet's outspoken comments had made her feel nervous, and it was with a feeling of relief that she stepped through into a room where the blinds had been drawn down, and the heavy shutters pulled to. Even so she saw dimly that Miss Carleton was lying down.

"Ella? I'm afraid I woke you up?"

"Indeed you didn't! I'm only resting—resting, and going back to the past—always an unprofitable occupation when a woman reaches my age."

There was a most unwonted tone of rebellious bitterness in the low, sweet voice.

Pushing her still abundant hair back, she went on: "Hearing that dreadful thing

about Beau Saberer, Laura, gave me a horrible shock."

"I remember what a shock it gave me, Ella. Somehow one can't think of Beau as blind——"

Ella Carleton's face quivered. "It's brought back everything—everything I thought I had quite, quite forgotten! I schooled myself, years ago, never to think of him. I had to do that, for I needn't tell *you*, my darling friend, that I adored him——"

She paused a moment, and then again there came a touch of bitterness in her low voice. "What a fool I was! I threw away two chances of being a happy woman, and of leading a normal, happy life. In a way I suppose I did realise, even then, how unwise I was, for I did try, for nearly a year, to forget Beau. It was after his smash, during the time he was A.D.C. to some Colonial Governor. But he came back at the end of twelve months, and it all began again!"

"I didn't know that. You see I was married by then, and selfishly absorbed in myself," said the Duchess in a remorseful tone.

The other went on, as if she had not heard the interruption, "I can talk of it all, now, as if it had happened to someone else," but she was clasping and unclasping her hands with a nervous movement. "Perhaps you'll be surprised to hear, Laura, that he admitted, not once but many, many times, that he loved me—loved me, I mean, as he had never loved anyone else. But he also had to confess that he didn't care enough for me to lead a poor man's life. And yet—and yet he wouldn't let me go! He knew that Jack Robey, his own best friend, cared for me; but that only made him the more determined to—to keep my love."

And then Ella Carleton burst into a storm of weeping, and the Duchess, running forward, knelt down by the sofa and put her arms round the thin shoulders of her friend.

"Why didn't you marry Jack Robey, after Beau's second smash?" she asked pitifully.

"My mother's illness kept me a prisoner—and, well, the truth is I was smashed up too, in a way. Some women always remain young. You look as if you would never grow old, Laura. Your hair will go grey, and then it will become white, but you will still feel as if you were a young woman. Things have gone well with you—thank God

they have! But they have gone ill with me, right through. You were clever, and got the man you loved; I was stupid, and failed."

The Duchess began, "He wasn't——"

But the other cut her short. "Don't say he wasn't worthy of me! That was what my mother was always saying. Of course I didn't know, then, all that I learnt afterwards. I didn't realise that he was—well, how shall I put it?"—she hesitated, then with an effort she brought out the words, "a professional lady-killer, a breaker of hearts."

"I don't think that's true; you're not fair, Ella."

The Duchess felt very much dismayed. She told herself quickly that she would have to tell the Duke that they couldn't ask Sir John Saberer to stay with them till later in the year.

"Beau did really love you," she murmured. "And women ran after him far more than he ran after them. I once challenged him to tell me the truth about you. It was during that evening—I wonder if you remember it as well as I do?—when we four, James and I, you and Beau, spent an evening at Ranelagh."

"I've cause to remember that night," said Ella Carleton sorely. "Though I knew Beau was fearfully in debt, it was the first time I realised that if he married at all he would only marry a girl with money."

The Duchess winced. "It was the first time I realised it too," she said slowly. "I told him so right out. Of course he couldn't deny it; and he admitted that you were the only girl he'd ever cared for, Ella."

"I've often wondered if he did ask you to marry him that night?"

"I'm afraid he meant to. I know that I told him right out that I liked James. And he wouldn't believe me! He thought I was set on becoming a Duchess," she smiled mirthlessly, "and we parted on really bad terms that evening. I almost hated him after that! But he wrote me such a nice letter when my engagement was given out, and then I forgave him!"

Ella Carleton drew herself gently from the other woman's arms. She dabbed her eyes with her handkerchief. "Forget all we've said, Laura. It's wrong of me to have spoken of poor Beau as I did just now. In a way I should be glad to see him again."

"D'you really mean that, Ella?" asked the Duchess in a singular tone.

The other hesitated. "I think I do really

mean it. You see," she smiled wanly, "as he's blind now, he wouldn't see how very, very changed I am, from the girl he once loved."

"I asked you that question because James wants me to send him a wire asking him to come here on Friday for a long week-end. But of course I can put off doing so to the autumn. In fact, just now I'd made up my mind to do that."

"I shouldn't like you to put him off, now that it's so hot, and the country is so lovely," said Ella Carleton simply. "In a way I feel as if all that had happened to me in another life, and—and I really should like to see Beau again, Laura."

III.

At three o'clock on Friday afternoon the Duchess was sitting alone, reading a book, on the terrace. Sir John Saberer, who was coming by train, was not due for another three hours, and the Duke had taken off Miss Carleton after lunch to see a very remarkable calf, on which all his hopes were just now fixed.

Suddenly there fell on the still, warm, air, the sound of a door opening and, looking up, the Duchess saw coming towards her, walking with quick even strides down the long terrace, her old friend and one-time wooer. His head was thrown back, and there was about him nothing to mark one who is blind from his fellows, excepting that by his side stepped a respectable soldierly-looking servant, evidently his one-time batman.

"Beau? How glad I am to see you again!" she exclaimed, in a tone of real welcome, though a welcome she studiously made clear of any touch of pity in her kind, soft voice.

He stopped in his long stride with an almost painful suddenness. "You can go now, Bentley," and the man turned on his heel.

As the Duchess took her old friend's hand, "James will be here very soon now," she said.

"I must apologise for having come so long before my time, but to tell you the truth——"

He smiled, and at once she told herself that he was in very truth the same Beau Saberer; for it was a most delightful smile. A smile which now, as in the old days, went straight to any woman's heart—and that whether she were young or old, plain or lovely.

"—I've been so looking forward to coming to you to-day, Duchess, that I felt I couldn't spend the whole of this lovely day in town. So I just took the first train—it was a very slow train—and a stuffy old fly brought me up the hill to the Castle."

"You mustn't call me 'Duchess.'"

She put her soft hand on his arm. "I'm sure you used to call me 'Laura' in the old days—at any rate when no one was by."

"But I don't remember that you ever called me 'Beau,' till just now. It was always 'Captain Saberer.'"

"Ah well, girls were still very proper in our young days—more proper, and just a little more sly than they are now, eh?"

And then he said something which touched her. "All the same, those were the good days," he exclaimed. "I wouldn't exchange the girls of my youth for the girls of to-day, if half of what I'm told by my friends is true. Only yesterday I heard an old chap at the club imploring his nephew to remain single."

"You mustn't believe all that the old fogeys say," she said, smiling.

"You've not changed one bit, Laura!" and he laughed.

"I hope James told you that you would find no party here?"

"I'd much rather be alone with you!"

"But we've one visitor, who's a great friend of mine," went on the Duchess a little quickly. "I'm sure you remember Ella Carleton?"

"Ella Carleton?"

All the light left his handsome face, and there was also a good deal of surprise in his voice. "I thought she lived abroad entirely, now?"

"She's come back, and I hope she'll settle down in England for good."

There was—was it an awkward?—pause. Then, hesitatingly, he uttered the words, "Of course, I remember that you and she were very great friends as girls."

"Indeed we were, and we've never lost sight of one another. After all, there's no new friend, however delightful, like an old friend."

"That's true," he said slowly.

"And there was always something different about Ella," went on the Duchess a little breathlessly. "It wasn't that she was clever, exactly; but she was what a lovely girl so seldom is—marvellously kind, and so unselfish."

And then something happened which very much surprised the Duchess. The man

whom she still thought of as Beau Saberer uttered in a low voice the lines :

“ ‘A sweet attractive kinde of grace,
A full assurance given by lookes,
Continuall comfort in a face
The lineaments of gospel-books.’ ”

I used to think that those lines described Ella Carleton exactly.”

“ I never knew that reciting poetry was among your many accomplishments, Beau.”

With a somewhat embarrassed laugh he answered : “ When I was a little chap my mother made me learn a lot of poetry—I mean really good verse. I often recite poetry to myself now. It helps the time to go by.”

There was a long silence between them. Then she asked suddenly : “ If you really felt like that about Ella, how had you the heart to behave to her as you did ? ”

He answered at once, in a hard voice : “ I was stupidly vain, foolishly spoilt by the fools about me and, further, idiotically extravagant. Also her father couldn’t stand me, and—you can’t condemn me more than I condemn myself.”

As she said nothing, he turned and faced her, his face working. “ I’ve been well punished, Laura ”—and she saw the pain in his sightless eyes. “ I wonder if you remember a talk you and I had about twenty-six years ago ? I’ve never forgotten it—if you have. You said I was behaving like a cad—and I was. When you told me just now that Ella Carleton was here, I felt like going back to town by the next train. But it all happened such a long time ago, and she was so young then, that I hope she’s forgotten that I behaved like a beast——”

After a moment’s pause he added, sorely, “ Women don’t suffer as men suffer. They’re such self-deceivers.”

“ I’m surprised to hear you say that, Beau,” said the Duchess mildly, and to herself she whispered, “ I do believe he’s still fond of her, after all,” while aloud, in a tone she strove to make natural and unconcerned, she observed, “ There are James and Ella—coming over the lawn. James *will* be pleased that you took an earlier train.”

A few moments later, but each moment seemed like a long minute to the Duchess, Sir John Saberer and Miss Carleton were shaking hands as if they had parted only the day before. There followed a little desultory talk, though not the “ do you remember this ? ” “ do you remember that ? ” which would have been natural among four such old friends.

Even the Duke realised that by-gones were to be by-gones ; but he did not connect that fact with his quiet, faded-looking guest, but rather with his own wife.

At last he exclaimed : “ Look here, Beau ? D’you feel like taking a stroll ? Mind you, it’s hot !—but we can go down a shady way.”

The other sprang to his feet, “ It’s never too hot for me.”

As soon as the two men were out of ear-shot, Ella Carleton turned to the friend of her girlhood. “ I’m so glad that’s over,” and then she smiled, but it was a very sad smile.

“ Seeing Beau like this has killed all the bitterness—the foolish, unkind, unreasonable bitterness—which I still felt, Laura.”

“ I don’t think what you felt was either unkind or unreasonable,” said the Duchess in a low voice.

“ Oh yes, it was, Laura—utterly unreasonable ! ” She waited a moment. “ The Duke said Beau wasn’t altered at all. But I see such a change—the expression of his face is entirely different.”

“ I know what you mean, though if you hadn’t said so, I shouldn’t have realised it, Ella. There was something in the expression of poor Beau’s face that I never liked in the old days. He was always secretly conscious, I think, of how good-looking he was, and how popular. Also what a fine fellow all round the younger men about him took him to be ! That self-satisfied look, I admit, has quite gone now.”

She did not like to add, “ But some of his old, conquering charm has gone with it.”

“ He looks,” said Ella pensively, “ as if he’s forgotten the way to smile.”

“ Oh, but there you’re wrong ! ” The Duchess spoke with a good deal of energy. “ Something I said before you and James came back made him shout with laughter.”

“ Then I’m afraid,” said Miss Carleton quietly, “ that my presence makes him feel uncomfortable.”

And, as her friend made a quick gesture of denial—“ It would be strange indeed if it didn’t. So I hope you won’t mind, Laura, if I’m up in my sitting-room a great deal during the short time Beau Saberer’s going to be here. By the way, how long is he going to stay ? ”

“ I think till Tuesday,” said the Duchess hesitatingly.

She felt a good deal disturbed—things were not going at all as she had planned. Less than half an hour ago she had thought

that everything was going to fall out with fairy-tale exactness and perfection.

"That's only three days," observed the other quietly. "I'll begin by having tea upstairs, if I may, and then I'll have a good rest till it's time to dress for dinner."

As she saw the Duchess about to utter a word of protest, she added quickly: "Honestly! I'd far rather see very little of Beau. We're not likely ever to meet again—I mean after this visit of his here. And of course you can make him believe what is true—that I came here for a rest. We shall see quite enough of one another as it is, for of course I don't want him to think I am avoiding him."

IV.

THOUGH the Duchess, in a simple way, prided herself on her knowledge of men and women, men and women were always surprising her by the things they did and by the things they left undone.

About six o'clock, after the Duke, the Duchess, and Sir John Saberer had had, or so at any rate the Duchess said secretly to herself, quite enough of one another, Ella Carleton came down and joined them.

"I've had a wonderful rest," she said cheerfully.

There was a joyous, almost a youthful, lilt in her voice; and even her host, who seldom noticed what another woman was looking like when his wife was by, noted that his guest did look very much better than she had done, say, yesterday.

"That's owing to our good air. It's the best air in England," he said dogmatically.

"Though you're by way of being so modest, James, I always notice," said the Duchess teasingly, "that your good wine does require a good deal of bush!"

As she said the words she was telling herself, with a good deal of surprise, that Ella certainly did look—was it younger, or only very much less tired, than even a couple of hours ago? She even felt sorry that the fourth member of their party could not see how very charming his old love looked just now.

For one thing, Miss Carleton had put on a pretty grey chiffon frock, which the Duchess had not yet seen her wear; and, with that becoming frock, she wore a large shady hat of a type which, if not in the fashion, gives grace and charm to a face no longer young.

"It's much cooler now," went on Ella Carleton, still in that happy, almost light-

hearted, new tone. "I think I'll go off and have a little walk. Will you come too, Laura?"

The Duchess hesitated, just for the fraction of a second, and while she was hesitating, Beau Saberer spoke, "May I come too, Ella?"

And then before her friend could answer, the Duchess exclaimed, "I've some tiresome local business to talk over with James! But after that's over I'll come and meet you."

After the one-time lovers had walked off together, she guiding him down the steep steps leading to the gardens below, the Duke said, "Well, Laura? What's your business?"

"My business, and yours too, James, is to keep out of their way while Beau and Ella make friends again."

"Friends again? Were they ever enemies?" he asked, staring at her.

"You forget," she said demurely, "that Beau, like old Pam, liked to give every woman a chance. I suppose he gave Ella a chance—just as he gave me a chance."

A light broke in on him. "D'you mean that Ella was the girl to whom, according to you, Beau behaved badly ages ago? If so, I can't understand your having allowed me to ask him down here, Laura," and he looked perturbed.

"Beau was a breaker of hearts!" she answered lightly. "I don't suppose that he chipped more than a little bit off Ella's heart. But look over there, darling? See how slowly they are walking. He's hard at it now, mending that break"—her voice faltered, and the tears welled up into her eyes.

"Then that's why she's looking this evening so much——"

"—younger and prettier?"

"I wasn't going to say that at all! Do let me finish what I was going to say."

"Say it!"

"She looks better. It's the effect of our good air."

The Duchess gazed at him scornfully. "Did you notice her pretty frock, James, and her really lovely hat?"

"You're not going to tell me that she put those on for a blind man?"

"Are you vain enough to think that she put them on for *you*?" she asked, dabbing her eyes.

He took hold of her arm, and forced her to look up into his face.

"Are you doing a wise thing, Laura? It's dangerous work, you know, bringing about a

marriage between middle-aged people. The couple don't always thank you afterwards."

"Kindness," said the Duchess thoughtfully, "often brings its own punishment. But I don't think it will in this case! Besides, why shouldn't those two be friends without any thought of marriage?" she said hypocritically.

"Don't ever tell me afterwards that I approved of, or abetted you, in any way!" he exclaimed, but there was a twinkle in his eyes.

"Men are much greater cowards than women," cried the Duchess gaily, "especially when a good deed is in question."

"Don't go and raise false hopes."

"I don't know what you mean, James," and the Duchess grew very pink.

"I meant Beau," he cried, shrinking back with a pretence of being frightened.

"Liar!" she exclaimed. And then—"Of course I'm not so foolish as to expect anything to happen before ever so long. But I do think he's still fond of her."

"I doubt it," and the Duke shook his head. "But I quite admit that in time propinquity, as Grandmamma used to say, may work wonders."

At half-past seven the Duchess made her way to Miss Carleton's sitting-room. She felt consumed with affectionate curiosity, but, to her surprise, her friend was not there. On her way down to the sitting-room, where they generally sat when alone, or with a tiny party, she ran across the Duke. "Have you seen Beau? It's getting on for eight. They must have come in long ago!"

"I'm sure they're still out. I said I was to be told at once when he came in."

And then he began to laugh. "I'm beginning to believe that you're right. I mean that Beau is still very fond of Ella, and also up to his old tricks. Why, they've been out nearly two hours!"

The Duchess said crossly, "He's the same old Beau—selfish as ever. She'll be quite ill to-morrow—she's not up to even half an hour's walk!"

Said the Duke mildly, "It might occur to you, darling, that——"

"That what?" she asked eagerly.

"They may have been sitting down part of the time? Thanks to your humane forethought, I've had thirty new benches put up in the park since the war, and at this time of year they're often covered with lovers."

"Sitting or standing, two hours is a long time."

"Let's go on to the terrace, and look if we can see them," suggested the Duke. "They may have lost count of time."

"They have so much time to make up," said the Duchess softly.

"You're incurably romantic!" exclaimed the Duke.

Eight o'clock rang out from the clock tower, as husband and wife walked out on to the terrace.

"There they are!" cried the Duchess joyfully. "But how slowly they're walking."

Her quick eyes noted the fact that Beau Saberer had his arm through that of his companion.

"James was right. He's up to his old tricks," she thought vexedly, and hoped that the Duke did not see all she saw.

"We'll go and hurry them up, Laura. I do hate sitting down late to my dinner!" And he called out, "I wonder if you know that it's gone eight?"

But the two who were now walking slowly towards him did not seem to hear his voice. And even the Duke forgot how late it was when, as the four met, Sir John Saberer said gravely, "Laura? Ella has just done me the great honour of saying she will be my wife. As I think you know, I've loved her since the first moment I saw her, so—so there seems no reason for delay."

"Beau wonders if——" Ella Carleton looked pleadingly at her friend.

"—we could be married here, by special licence," went on Sir John Saberer eagerly. "Do you think James would mind?"

And then the blind man started, for it was the Duke's voice that answered, and in such a kind, hearty tone: "Mind, my dear old chap? I shall be delighted!"

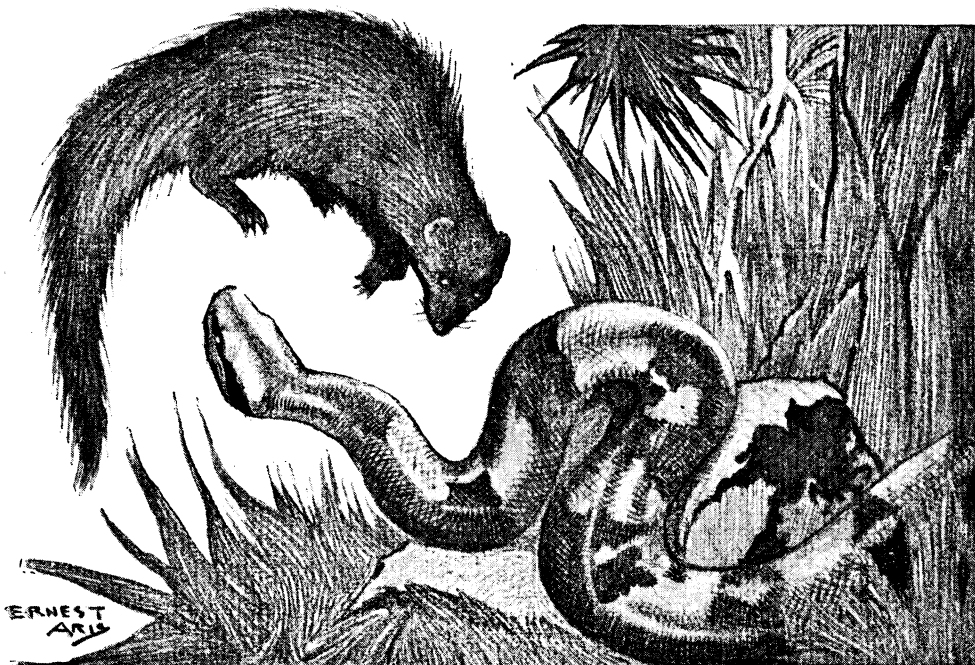
And then, none of them ever quite knew how it happened, the Duchess found herself embracing the future bridegroom, and the Duke the future bride.

But when they had sorted themselves out, the two ladies walked on together. "You must be so tired, darling Ella," observed the Duchess. "Would you rather not come down to dinner?"

But the Duke called out: "Nonsense! Of course she must come down and have her health drunk. I'll tell Fannit to open our last bottle of the Waterloo Brandy, both because a thimbleful of it will do Ella great good, and also——"

"And also what?" interrupted the Duchess.

"Well, Laura, I've not forgotten the old saying, 'Brandy for heroes,' eh?"



"The hairy bundle flashed up into the air, revealing itself in its upward leap as a sharp-snouted, pink-eyed, weasel-like small beast with a long tail fluffed out in anger to twice the size of the slim body. The foolish young python had not known the snakes' proverb, 'Let sleeping mongooses lie.'"

◉ THE LONG ◉ ◉ GLUTTON ◉

By LIEUT-COLONEL GORDON CASSERLY

Author of "Dwellers in the Jungle," "Life in an Indian Outpost," etc.

◉ ILLUSTRATED BY ERNEST ARIS ◉

THE brown-skinned Siamese boatmen sang their quaint Eastern songs as their picturesque craft glided with their cargoes of cocoa-nuts down the Menam river, where it crept along between jungle-clad banks on its way to the capital and the far-off sea. But against the stream a heavily-laden boat was being forced slowly forward by its crew; and a lad, the sweat glistening on his body naked to the waist, tugged fretfully at his oar and, in the steamy heat of April in the tropics glad of any excuse to stop rowing, eased up suddenly and pointed to the river-bank. The eyes of his companion followed his gesture; but

the sight that he indicated was too common to hold their attention for more than a few seconds, and they abused him as they took to their oars again.

Under a tree close to the river lay a strangely shaped heap, which, although the setting sun was touching the horizon, their keen sight recognised as a huge snake, a python, coiled carefully around a pile of parchment-skinned eggs. Just as the men turned away to continue their hard toil, the serpent slowly unwound itself, glided down the bank and, plunging its nose into the shining stream, began to drink, swallowing the water in gulps. Then, while the boat

was lost to sight as it rounded a bend, the big snake—she was twenty-five feet long—writhed her slow way up the bank again to her pile of eggs and wreathed her gleaming coils around them so as to hide them from the last rays of the sun.

For its baleful light might sterilise them and bring disaster to the small embryos inside. As it was, she seemed dissatisfied with them, and by gentle muscular movements pushed outside her coils ten or twelve of the eggs, the shells of which were hard or shrivelled, by which the mother knew that they were addled and that further care bestowed on them would be wasted.

But there was little need to grieve over them; for there were still nearly sixty left in the encircling embrace of her cold body, which sheltered them from the light but gave them no heat, of which they had no need. She was truly a devoted mother, for during the eighty days of their hatching she scarcely left them. She drank occasionally, but she went hungry all through the weary period; and only just as the eggs began to give up their occupants did she go away from them to hunt for food. And so she was slowly heaving her heavy bulk through the dense undergrowth in search of a little deer or some other quadruped to satisfy her long-endured hunger when the first of the egg-shells opened to let out a miniature copy of herself. Small as compared with her, but yet no midget; for the new-born baby python was two and a half feet long. He was no weakling, and, for one so newly launched in life, was blessed with a usually healthy appetite which he started out to satisfy without delay.

While the blunt noses of his brothers and sisters were tapping heavily at the parchment walls that confined them to break their way out, he writhed forward as his mother had done to find any living thing to allay the pangs of his hunger. He turned away from the broad silver band of the shining river and wriggled his way in the green gloom under the dense canopy of luxuriant foliage. He had had no maternal counsel to guide him in his search for prey; but instinct was his teacher and hunger his urger.

Once or twice he paused to lift his head and a third of his length from the green-matted soil and balanced in the air, while his forked tongue shot out and quivered incessantly as though sensitively feeling for a quarry. But each time he lowered himself to the ground again and glided on noise-

lessly through the undergrowth, extending and contracting his elastic body so that the under-scales were stretched apart, gripping the earth, and drew him forward like so many tiny legs.

Suddenly he checked in his smooth undulation and again raised his flat head, as though scenting the air. Then he lowered quickly and glided very swiftly forward. On a little heap of eggs sat a large bird drowsing with closed eyelids at her motherly task, blind to the approaching danger. No instinct warned her, no sound aroused her, before Fate in the shape of the smothering, strangling embrace of the young python overwhelmed her, crushing her flesh and bones to a quivering pulp and silencing her despairing cries.

The darting forked tongue licked her formless body, covering it with a greasy slime to help its passage down through the gaping maw. The narrow head poised above her. The jaws in the narrow slit of the mouth opened, stretched astonishingly wide, and the slow process of engulfing the dead bird began. For the jaw-bones of the snake, as with all his tribe, were not joined at the sockets, so that the mouth could be widely distended; and they were hinged in the middle in front, and thus the right and the left sides could be protruded independently. In this way, while one side held the prey the other could be pushed forward and get a grip further back and draw the prey into the gullet, dragging it in with the slanting teeth. Well greased, the feathery mass slipped slowly down the throat to the point where the movable ribs reached up to grip and pull it into the stomach. As it went a great bulge in the distended skin marked its gradual passage to its final resting-place.

The bird was a big one, and the meal was enormous for so young a feeder; but even at this early stage of his career he showed himself a glutton. For, not content with a repast that would have satisfied a far larger snake, he set to work to swallow the eggs as well. Then, with mother and brood safely stowed away, he crawled with difficulty a few yards to where a convenient hole in the ground offered a safe hiding-place. And into it he crept sluggishly to his long sleep of digestion after his gargantuan feast, the first of the many jungle tragedies of which he was to be the author accomplished.

Luck had favoured him at the outset of his career; and not all his brothers and sisters were to be as fortunate. The second of the batch who freed himself from the

imprisoning shells had gone off in a different direction, but on the same quest. He was not so wise, however, in his choice of a prey. He sensed a meal in a small furry animal curled up under a bush, and, spurred on by gnawing hunger, glided rapidly towards it. Reaching it, he poised to strike.

Quicker than thought the hairy bundle flashed up into the air, revealing itself in its upward leap as a sharp-snouted, pink-eyed, weasel-like small beast with a long tail fluffed out in anger to twice the size of the slim body. The foolish young python had not known the snakes' proverb, "Let sleeping mongooses lie." In his folly he had chosen the deadliest enemy of the serpent race as the subject of his first experiment in food-getting.

He struck down heavily at the spot where the mongoose had been—but was no longer. And the agile little animal dropped lightly on the points of its toes to earth several feet away. With a shrill, whistling scream it danced furiously around the bewildered python, whose head and quivering tongue felt stupidly around for the vanished quarry. The next moment the mongoose leaped high in air again and came down almost astride the snake. Instantly its sharp teeth nipped the python behind the head and severed the spine. And, already full-fed and content with the victory, the destroyer turned contemptuously away from its victim, whose body was helplessly thrashing the earth in the frantic movements of tortured muscles in the death-agony.

Unconscious of his fate, his more fortunate eldest brother awoke after a long sleep of digestion to continue his gluttonous career with greater discretion in his choice of food. He preyed on eggs, birds and small animals, the size of his quarry increasing with his rapid growth; for each year of his first four brought him another two and a quarter feet of length, so that on his fourth birthday he was already nine feet long and still growing.

Although he was not armed with that deadly weapon of so many snakes, poison, for pythons are not venomous, he scarcely needed it, for his strength was enormous. The colour of his back was brown of various shades streaked with the network of black marks which has earned his race the name of "The Reticulate Python." A black line ran over his head from the snout to the nape, and his colour underneath was a dirty yellow marbled with brown. His appetite was voracious, and he was a terror to the little deer and other small quadrupeds of

the jungle. He had succeeded in surprising occasionally some unwary monkey; and even the big scaly lizards, looking like crocodiles, were not safe from his all-devouring maw, dangerous to swallow as they are, since they are armoured at all points. Indeed, one of them was nearly the death of him, for its sharp claws all but tore him open from inside, as it was drawn down into his stomach.

But Fortune had decreed that he was not to end so tamely and had marked out a wider field for his voracious appetite. His internal wounds healed in time; and, when he had recovered and gnawing hunger drove him out to forage again, a sense of smell of some strange thing drew him towards the river just as night was falling. A boat, deep-laden with cocoa-nuts, was moored against the bank, and its crew had landed and, having lit a fire, were cooking their supper. From the dark shadows of the jungle around them many wondering eyes watched them; and the leaping flames, lighting with ruddy glow the branches of the trees overhead, awoke the monkeys, who drew near to peer down sleepily at the unusual intruders. The Glutton's dim sight could not discern the men; but the odours of their food seemed to reach him and make him inquisitive. So when, their meal ended and the fire extinguished, they returned on board to sleep, he glided silently down the bank and writhed his way on to the boat to investigate. A sudden rustling and stirring in the hold attracted him, and a score of frightened rats, sensing him, scampered over the cocoa-nuts and drew him after them into the gloomy depths filled with the hairy globes of the hard-shelled fruit. Active as the rodents were, they were not all quick enough to escape the intruder, and in the darkness a chase ensued that ended in the death of a number of them. His hunger partially satisfied, the python curled himself up sluggishly at the bottom of the hold; and, when before dawn the boatmen cast loose their craft and let the current sweep it down-stream, it carried a stowaway of whom they knew nothing.

Day after day they glided peacefully down the river, the Glutton, frightened by the unusual noises and the presence of the men, remaining deep-hidden. And, with only an occasional scanty meal of rats, there he stayed until, the long voyage ended, the boat reached its destination and was made fast beside a wharf in the busy city of Bangkok. A number of coolies came aboard and began to take the cocoa-nuts off in baskets, and the



"As the shining body was drawn back swiftly one of the coolies struck at it with a knife, gashing it deeply. Instantly the python lifted himself into the air and struck him a lightning blow."

frightened python shrank farther and farther into the shadows as the heap diminished. Luckily for him, the arrival had taken place late in the day, and night fell before all the cargo was unloaded. So coolies and crew went ashore and left him undiscovered.

As soon as he realised his escape he drew his coils out of the depths and on to the deck. Here, poor as were his sight and hearing, he was nevertheless bewildered by the noise, the glare and the activity around him. For fires, lamps and flares lit up the darkness, steamers and big junks were being loaded, steam-whistles shrilled and launches rushed up and down the river with noisy chugging of their engines. On shore the rice-mills were still at work, and the angry scream of steam-saws rose above the myriad other noises.

But nevertheless fear and a homing instinct drove the python to the land; and, in terror such as he had never known in his hitherto sheltered life, he slid overboard and swam to the shore. Climbing the bank, he writhed forward swiftly, blindly, until a dark mass obstructed his way. It was a high stack of timber; and, a convenient crevice in it near the bottom offering him a refuge, he crawled far into the pile and curled himself up in the very heart of it.

For a week he did not venture abroad, terrified and dazed by the traffic, the shouting of gangs of coolies at work, the hooting of the steamers in the river. But at last one night hunger drove him out and he came forth from his hole to find an obliging fat young pig nosing around the base of the wood-stack. Before the astonished animal realised what was happening to it, the tightening coils of the famished python were cracking its ribs, and soon the Glutton was enjoying the first good meal that he had had for many a long day. And it so distended him that he could not pass through the narrow crevice of the opening into the timber-stack and was forced to drag his heavy body over the ground until he found a hole in the bank in which he could crawl to sleep away the time of digestion. His periods of repose after eating were always far shorter than those of the generality of his kind, most of which go for weeks, even months, between meals. One in captivity in Regent's Park fasted a year and eleven months and lived. But long spells of abstinence did not suit the Glutton, and he was soon out again searching for food.

He found that his luck had led him to an earthly paradise for hungry snakes; for

the quarter teemed with pigs, pariah-dogs, cats, fowls and ducks, all roaming loose at night scavenging, and all with their senses blunted by the security of civilisation, which made them far easier prey than the wary beasts and birds of the jungle. And so it was not surprising that the Glutton found that he was by no means a solitary example of his race; for the city and suburbs of Bangkok swarmed with pythons, living in the compounds of private houses or offices, burrowing under buildings and woodpiles, or hiding in holes in hedges or banks. As these snakes were not aggressive or venomous, fed only at rare intervals and came out at night, the inhabitants did not interfere with them; and they lived a sluggish existence in the uproar and stir of the capital, the noise of mills and factories, the shrieking of motor-horns and steam-whistles, the crash of traffic and the busy life of a populous city. Their presence made no difference to the new-comer; for food was plentiful and, for one young and powerful as he was, easy to get. So he fed well and grew with the passing time.

Ten years went by peacefully and uneventfully in the busy haunts of civilization and found the Glutton at the end of them more than twenty feet in length. He weighed nearly fifteen stone, for he ate well and led a lazy life, getting his meals with little exertion, since the domesticated pigs, tame cats and masterless dogs, absorbed in their nightly hunt for food in the garbage heaps of the slums, fell easy victims to a hungry snake.

It was an ideal existence for the Glutton, and he certainly had no reason to regret the jungle that now lay so far behind him. Living in the midst of plenty, he would have been contented never to have changed his lodgings; but that source of so much upheaval in quiet places everywhere nowadays, the speculative builder, casting a greedy eye on the waste land near the wharves, was the cause of his being driven to seek another home. For a horde of coolies armed with mattocks and baskets fell upon the bank in which the Glutton had dwelt so long and began to dig it up for foundations of new houses. And the evicted python escaped under cover of night and wandered across the city in the small hours, sliding along the deserted streets, scared by the lights and daunted by the rattle of a belated—or early—cart. And daylight found him ensconced in a hole under a ramshackle house huddled away in a corner of large

gardens, in which stood a number of buildings of gay and elaborate architecture.

Without knowing it, he had risen high in the social scale, for he was now an inhabitant of a royal residence. Chance had led him to take up his abode in the servants' quarters of the Wang Luang, the King's Palace. It was but an empty honour, he soon found, as he glided at night about the grounds and even ventured close to the buildings, only to be frightened away by the sound of voices or the tread of sentries. For alas! no fat pigs rooted among refuse in the royal grounds, no pariah-dogs nosed garbage heaps, and scraggy fowls were not allowed to wander at will and scratch up the flower-beds. As a feeding-place for a hungry python the Palace was a failure, the foul slum near the river a much more desirable residence. Night after night the hungry Glutton roamed disconsolate and starving about the park; but nothing ever offered itself as a meal.

In desperation at last he dared the daylight and writhed his way through the gardens, taking refuge in the bushes whenever he sensed the approach of human beings. He was hiding thus under a flaming mass of scarlet bougainvillæa when he felt a light touch on the tip of his tail, which he had incautiously omitted to tuck in under cover out of sight and which in his agitation was twitching nervously up and down. And playing with it, patting it with dainty paw, was a cat.

But such a cat! In his years in Bangkok the Glutton had ended the lives of cats by the score; but never had he seen the like of this one. It was an aristocrat of the feline race. Its coat was sleek and silky, in colour cream and chocolate, and around its neck it wore a silver collar with a tiny gold bell. Above all—which mattered most—it was fat, well nourished; and every nerve and muscle of the snake quivered to the urge to serve it to the clamorous stomach.

As a lasso is flung, so a coil of the python's lithe length whirled out through the screen of leaves and twined about the heedless cat, stunning it with the force of the blow and crushing it in the sudden, convulsive tightening of the steel-like muscles. The poor little beast, utterly overwhelmed, perished without a sound, and the great jaws gaped to engulf it. Without being aware of it, the Glutton was guilty of the awful crime of *lèse-majesté*. For this had been royal property, one of the renowned

Palace breed of cats, the darlings of queens of Siam for countless generations.

The python recked little of that. All he knew was that the animal, although a tasty morsel, despite silver collar and golden bell, was but a mouthful and did not go far to satisfy his hunger. But where one had been more might come; and he curled up in the great bougainvillæa bush and waited.

Not until next day was his patience rewarded. Then another Palace favourite, escaping from gilded captivity, came through the gardens, guiltily avoiding the gardeners at work on the flower-beds. As it stalked the birds that fluttered in the bushes a waving object caught its eye, a provocative something which moved in a way that no cat could resist, and, like its predecessor, it began to play with the tantalisingly protruded tip of the Glutton's tail.

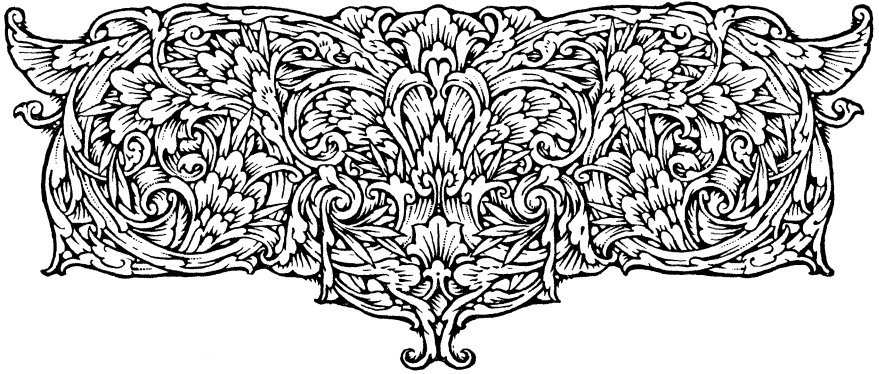
Again out of the scarlet mass of vegetation flashed a lasso-like coil, flung around the startled animal. But this time, as luck would have it, an intervening branch of the bush deflected the python's aim, the constricting loop was slightly diverted and did not instantly crush out the cat's life, as on the previous occasion. And in its fright and agony it screamed ear-piercingly, startling a group of gardeners at work close by. Looking around, they saw what was happening, and muttering abuse on the ancestors of all serpents, the head gardener picked up a hoe and, followed by his underlings, ran towards the scene of the tragedy. He was furiously angry; for he knew that he would be blamed for not keeping the Palace grounds clear of snakes, and he would pay dearly for the slaughter of one of the Queen's favourites.

The Glutton, occupied in licking and covering with slimy saliva the now crushed and dead cat, was suddenly made aware of the rush of men towards him. Peaceable as his kind are and generally ready to cower timorously or take flight if attacked, he was now too hungry to give up his prey without a fight. As the head gardener ran at him he suddenly uplifted a third of his length into the air, and seven feet of ponderous python, poised on the coils of the remaining length, rose straight up and swayed like a quivering pillar. Then swift and straight he struck forward and down in a fierce lunge; and like a battering-ram the big head, with all the weight and strength of the long, heavy body behind it, drove straight at the onrushing man, hit him full on the chest, and with the awful force of the blow knocked him back ten feet, smashing in his

breast-bone and killing him instantly. As the shining body was drawn back swiftly, one of the coolies struck at it with a knife, gashing it deeply. Instantly the python lifted himself into the air and struck him a lightning blow, hurling him to the ground, then swift as thought flung a coil about the man's body, another around his legs, crushing him as in a great vice. The coolie's shrieks, the shouts of his comrades as they threw themselves on the snake, trying to tear the fatal loops from the victim, rang loud through the gardens, and from every

quarter men rushed towards the struggling group. From the Palace the soldiers of the Royal Guard came running, weapons at the ready. The united strength of a score of hands failed to loosen the crushing coils, and the lashing tail, as they grasped it, swept men off their feet.

But, as the python lifted his head to strike again, a soldier thrust the muzzle of his rifle into the gaping jaws and pressed the trigger. There was a loud report, and, skull shattered by the bullet, the Glutton's coils slowly relaxed.

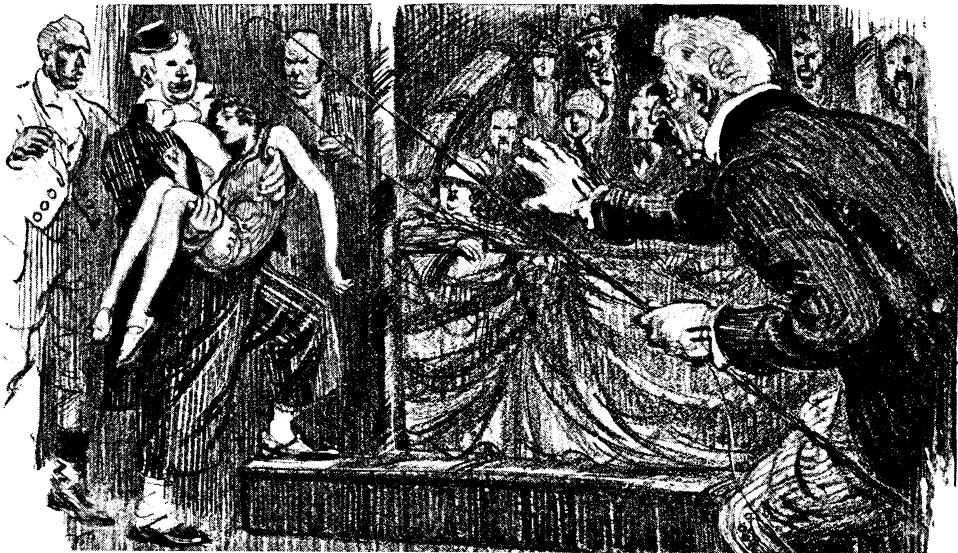


IN ST. JAMES'S PARK.

THERE was magic in the Park !
 Elfin lamps across the dark
 Out of fairy-land were lit
 As the evening covered it
 With a twinkling gossamer of summer rain ;
 And a loveliness of light,
 Born of neither day nor night,
 Changed each drunken silly chair
 Into some fantastic " fair "
 Blithely dancing o'er the shaven sward again.

Beauty wandered out to play
 Right across the gravelled way
 Grimy palings, grass and trees
 With enchanting wizardries
 Caught the silver-ribboned pathway in a net ;
 Magic trembled all around,
 Magic gold of magic ground,
 Magic ! Magic everywhere,
 Till you kicked a sopping chair
 And I *think* I heard you say " Confound the wet ! "

CLAUDINE CURREY.



'He lifted the limp figure in his arms and staggered away with it, repulsing the liveried attendants who were anxious to take it from him. Then, with one foot on the ring-ramp by the entrance-curtain, he turned and told the audience what he thought of them and of M. Ancillotti.'

LE PETIT BOBB

By OLIVER MADOX HUEFFER

◉ ◉ ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK GILLETT ◉ ◉

"**B**UT you must get it for me," insisted the girl, between tears and anger. "Aunt Marcelle would never forgive me if I lost it. You know what she is like about the *étrennes* she gives us."

The young man gazed doubtfully up the tree, to where, some twenty feet above him, a gauzy scarf, caught on one of the branches, waved tantalisingly in the evening breeze.

"You can easily climb it if you stick your spurs into the bark," insisted the girl. She had not dismounted, but was holding the reins of her brother's horse and the advantage in height added force to her command. He glanced down sadly at his well-cut coat, already marred by his earlier efforts to climb, but resigned himself to another attempt. But the tree-trunk was too large to be clasped and too slippery for his polished gaiters to gain any grip. He was slipping down for the third time when Dominique came out of the golden dust-haze that masked the side-road. Seeing the group under the tall plane tree he stopped

and stared at it with an air of amused surprise. "Ello! Ello!! Ello!!! Ierewy aragainé!" he cried in a curious staccato voice, and then, relapsing into more conversational tones, "*Ques acou?* What is the matter?"

There was always something compelling in Dominique's personality—he owed his living to it indeed—and although he was very shabbily dressed, dusty to the eyes, carried a handkerchief-bundle hung from a hedge-stake across his shoulder and wore an absurd little black hat, like a child's, which did not protect his large, round face from the sun's rays, the girl at once accepted him as a possible champion. "My scarf there," she explained, pointing upward. "The wind caught it as I was riding and carried it up there. And now my brother cannot get it back for me."

"Tcha—tcha—tcha! Is that all? I thought you had at least found a dragon's nest." He laid aside his bundle and, kneeling, removed his well-worn shoes.

A moment later as it seemed to his astounded audience, he had run up the tree-trunk like a cat, reached the branch, carefully removed the bit of gauze so that it should not be torn, repeated shrilly his cry of "Ello ! Ello !! Ello !!! Ierewy aragain !" and, almost before they knew what had happened, was again on the ground shuffling into his shoes. "The pleasure is to me," he insisted, approaching the girl's horse and offering her the veil with a bow that brought his face almost to the ground. "It is a nothing—not worthy that the lips of mademoiselle should mention it," he protested in reply to her astonished murmur of thanks.

The young man regarded him hesitatingly, while his hand went towards his waistcoat pocket. "But—won't you let us—er—I am the Marquis de Pontamadour-Saluces." He stopped in obedience to a sign from his more understanding sister.

Dominique drew himself up to his full five foot two. "And I, Monsieur," he replied, "I am Le Petit Bobb"—he pronounced it "Boab"—"very much at your service." He waved his hat ceremoniously in the air, bowed as deeply as before and was twenty yards down the high-road before either could reply to him.

"He must be an ape," said the young man, looking ruefully after him.

"Or an apparition," laughed the girl. "But no, Raoul, I remember now. Le Petit Bobb. Last year—at the Cirque Ancillotti at Chartres. The Six English Bobbs—the clowns—of course I remember. Raoul—he is the very man we were looking for."

It was not very surprising that she should remember Le Petit Bobb, for all that he was tramping the high-road with a bundle over his shoulder, for he was well known to every circus-lover as an artist of high achievement. That he should be, as he seemed, out of employment at all was more surprising to those unaware of his recent history. For Le Petit Bobb was the most agile of Les Six Englishe Bobbs—the most popular troupe of acrobatic clowns that ever toured the white roads of France with the great Cirque Ancillotti. His quips, his quaint grimaces, his gymnastic feats, all ensured his fame in a country where the common people have still the common sense to prefer clean fooling to salacious sex-dramas or the ineptitudes of the cinema. Three months before his chance meeting with the young Pontamadours, Le Petit Bobb might have commanded prosperous

engagements anywhere between Dunkerque and Aigues-Mortes. And now—well, if you commit the unpardonable sin, you must expect to pay for it.

It happened at Chateausalins, which is a prosperous little manufacturing town in the iron-district of the Deux-Bièvres. The natives have a special place in their hearts for the circus, and whenever the great Ancillotti tent was set up in the famous Place des Poupettes at fair-times you could be certain that through the week it would be crowded to bursting-point. And of all its wonders none was more beloved than the muscular fooling of the Six Englishe Bobbs—not even the Twelve Royal Tigers of Bengal being put through their paces by the intrepid Princess Samirana of Boulton, or the mysteries of the Haute École as set forth by M. et Mme. Garros-Lemartin and their Eight Royal White Arab Stallions from the Deserts of Arabia. You will of course understand that the Six Englishe Bobbs had not a drop of English blood between them, for there are decencies to be observed; and just as in England you must be an Italian to become a Queen of Opera, so in France the circus-clown must be English or go handicapped for life. Whence the magic slogan you have heard on the lips of Dominique,—"Ello ! Ello !! Ello !!! Ierewy aragain !"

In private life Le Petit Bobb always maintained that he was of the South—of a good family in the neighbourhood of Toulouse—and that his name was, at length, Dominique de Llanos de Echevida. Unfortunately he could show no proof of his right to such a resounding patronymic, which his candid friends hinted he had invented for himself in one of his more romantic moments. He at least admitted that his earliest recollections were of an abandoned childhood spent, for the most part, on the Seine *berges* and below the bridges of Paris in a society of little vagabonds as neglected as himself. Such living as was his he picked up as voluntary assistant to old Mélanie, the 'tondeuse' or poodle-shearer of the Pont Solferino, and Madame Pouf, who 'teased' old mattresses into new utility on a similar pitch below the Pont St. Michel. That he achieved the seemingly impossible by growing up into a decent member of society he would probably himself have ascribed to his proud Southern descent; more truly it might be set down to a very tender heart concealed in a small, grotesque body, with a round head very

much too large for it with an infinite capacity for grimaces. Grow up an honest and a kindly man he did, found his life-work within the tan-ring of the circus-tent, and at something under forty became, as you have heard, the Famous Little Boaby of the Six Englishe Bobbs.

It was characteristic of him that, having decided on a Provençal ancestry, he grew up to feel a very real interest in and love for the men and matters of that romantic land. He learned the Langue d'Oc; he became a devotee of the works of Mistral and his school; his hand and heart were always open to the appeals of needy 'compatriots,' and in the end, as you are going to hear, it very nearly brought him to total grief.

At Clermont-Ferrand, a week before opening at Chateausalins, M. Ancillotti—in private life M. Dupin—ever on the lookout for new attractions, engaged the Three Sisters Hunyadi, Hungarian Queens of the Trapeze and Slack Wire. Naturally they were not sisters, nor were they Hungarians, nor was their name Hunyadi, but two of them at least were very capable performers, constitutionally daring and ready to take risks others might avoid, and, in a word, well worth the ample salary they demanded. It was otherwise with little Mitzi, as she was professionally styled, her real name being Laure Agenouillac. She was little more than a child, still certainly in her teens, small and of poor physique, providing, in a word, a piquant contrast, it was held, with the opulent charms of her elder 'sisters,' tall, broad and abundantly muscled after their kind. Unfortunately for her she was also constitutionally timid, the result perhaps of a tragic childhood. The child of a trapeze artist who lost his nerve through drink, she was at the mercy of a brutal stepmother who saw in her only a possible means of income. At the earliest possible age they sold her to a street performing family, with whom she suffered a cruel apprenticeship, and she was later sold to the Sisters Hunyadi, just then in search of a new foil, through the breakdown of the small boy who had previously held that unpleasant post. Perhaps at first poor little Laure welcomed her new bondage, which began only a few weeks before the Sisters joined the Ancillotti troupe, having been well enough trained in the elements of her profession to escape actual harsh treatment at the hands of her task-mistresses.

At Chateausalins the Sisters decided to

add a new attraction to their programme. Its most striking feature, from the point of view of a sensation-loving public, was that the Sisters ran up a slack-wire ascending from the edge of the tan-ring to a trapeze twenty feet above it, carried out the appropriate performance on the trapeze and at last, waving a selection of national flags in extended hands, leaped from the trapeze while it was still in motion to the upper end of the slack wire, and slid down it to the ground. To the expert this may seem less perilous than it sounds to the uninitiated; the very thought of it terrified little Mitzi out of her seven senses. Le Petit Bobb first became aware of her existence through hearing her screams at the very first rehearsal of the new sensation. He then discovered that Mitzi's father came from a village near Perpignan and his sympathy began to take an active form. He threatened the Sisters with the terrors of the law; he appealed unsuccessfully to M. Ancillotti, who replied that he had more important things to think about; he offered himself to provide a net to prevent accident, but was informed, coldly, as indeed he knew already, that the whole point of the performance lay in its suggestion of danger; he made up his mind himself to apply to the authorities if the child were not spared so grave an ordeal. Unfortunately he did not do so until too late—every Frenchman is a coward when it is a question of the law.

The opening night came. '*La petite chérie*,' as the ring servants called her, looking incredibly small and pitiful, in her blue satin tunic and pink tights, passed close to Le Petit Bobb on her way to the ring. Her wan face was set, with a new note of determination. "I am going to die, dear Boaby," she said in a whisper. "Good-bye—you have been very good to me."

"Courage, my little one," he whispered back, his large features working beneath the red and white paint. "All will be well. I shall be watching from below. Courage—for the sake of the Midi."

"Kiss me, dear Boaby," she said, lifting her face to his with a child's impulsiveness. "Then I shall feel braver."

Two minutes later a roar of applause told that the Sisters were bowing and smiling and pirouetting at the foot of the slack-wire. It was repeated as the Six Englishe Bobbs, in all the fantasy of their traditional costume, rolled, head over heels, into the ring, threw a dizzy selection of somersaults,

fell over their own feet and started a war of back-chat in what professed to be English, though perfectly intelligible to the least erudite member of the audience.

Some little time was needed for the preparation of the final 'Death Leap' as it was called. The pranks of the clowns covered this, until the first Sister was ready to descend. Le Petit Bobb was still hopping round the ring on one hand, his legs in the air, while his giant colleague Le Grand Bobb was following him, seeking to kick him, but falling over his own feet at every attempt, when a long-drawn hiss of anticipation followed by yells of delight told him that one at least of them had descended in safety. He righted himself, ignoring his own rôle, to see that it was Mlle. Franzci who was smiling and posturing on the tan. Again he pursued his difficult course, to be interrupted by another roar, with perhaps a shade of disappointment in it. The second Sister had reached the ground and was clasping the *Tricolore* and the Hungarian flags to her bosom with a careful enthusiasm.

Once more Le Petit Bobb applied himself to his rôle. He was intended to pull a large bunch of carrots from some pocket in his flapping trousers, to dangle them before Le Grand Bobb and tempt him to follow them. He was still pretending to struggle with them, as being too bulky to pass the orifice of his pocket, when a huge hissing gasp filled the whole great cavity of the circus-tent and at the same—or the next—moment something crashed down on to the tan beside him.

Then Le Petit Bobb went mad.

There is really no other word for it, for naturally the decencies must be preserved. In the case of an accident in the ring one thing is imperative. As soon as the attendants have carried out the victim—with as little delay as possible—the band breaks out into a jazz tune, the clowns practise their most exquisite drolleries. A few minutes later the Ring Master, or, in a case of urgency, M. Ancillotti himself (who, as everyone knows, would not tell a lie even were he paid for it), enters the ring, holds up his hand impressively and with a glad smile announces that the audience will be delighted to learn that no serious accident has occurred—(upon which the audience applauds dutifully though not without an undercurrent of regret)—and that Mlle. Mitzi herself will, in a few minutes, during which he appeals for their kind indulgence, herself appear

to assure them that all is well with her. The band strikes up again, the clowns leap their best; three minutes later—being the least possible time in which to assume the necessary raiment—a figure of similar size and suggestion, dressed in the clothes of the absent performer, appears between the curtains at the entrance, bowing, smiling and laying her hands on her heart—and the performance continues.

Such being the decencies it is the unforgivable sin to offend against them, as did Le Petit Bobb, who should certainly have known better. As soon as he was aware of the poor little quivering body beside him he went mad—there is no other word for it, I repeat. Everyone was agreed about that, even his own Brother Bobbs, some of whom had known and loved him for years. He lifted the limp figure in his arms and staggered away with it, repulsing the liveried attendants who were anxious to take it from him. Then, with one foot on the ring-ramp by the entrance-curtain, he turned and told the audience what he thought of them and of M. Ancillotti, and especially of the Sisters Hunyadi. I need not quote his words, which were very much those anyone else oblivious of the decencies might have used—for of course there was only one thing to be done. Even Le Grand Bobb, who was Le Petit Bobb's nearest friend and loved him as a brother, was agreed and began considering whom he could engage in the lost sinner's place long before Le Petit Bobb had finished his harangue.

They have a very good hospital at Biort—the capital of the Deux-Bièvres. It was built by M. Schubert, the great ironmaster, and it is altogether up-to-date, even to a decently paid staff, which is unusual in France. Thither little Mitzi was rushed at once in a swift motor-car—with Le Petit Bobb to care for her *en route*, you may be sure—to which fact it is probably due that she is alive and well to-day and could give you or me ten yards in a handicap hundred. For the moment Bobb was told that it was feared her back was broken and that she would probably never walk again, even if she lived through the night, which was doubtful.

There was of course no real reason why Le Petit Bobb should worry himself about a little waif, just because she had bad luck, like so many of us. But for any one you may choose of a dozen reasons, he there and then took an oath that he would, literally, put little Mitzi on her feet again. And

because it appeared on further examination that there was just a chance of it if she were sent to the Hôpital Poulain in Paris and operated upon by the famous Dr. Fréjus, sent there she was, though it was certain from the beginning that her cure would cost every sou that Le Petit Bobb had managed to put away in his '*bas de laine*' and very likely a good deal more. And having made himself responsible for all that might be needed, he started out to look for a new job.

Then it was that he came up against the punishment meted out to impenitent sinners. We sometimes hear that there are trade boycotts in other trades and other countries; it is at least certain that if you blot your copy-book so seriously as had Le Petit Bobb anywhere in the Continental circus-world you will find that your chances of further employment are practically at an end. So was Le Petit Bobb to find. For three months he tried and tried and tried again—and still without result—and so we find him at last, tramping the road between Bessincourt and Vic-Doulence, with a bundle on his shoulder and three hundred francs in his pocket, and not the remotest idea where to find another sou when they were finished. But because he knew that the little Mitzi was safe in hospital and making a hard fight for life—he had no quarrel to pick with Fate. After all—*saperlipopette!*—we must all pay for our luxuries. The Cirque Larrency was due to open at the Foire of Chartres in three days. M. Belleville, the *patron*, was an old friend who had, indeed, given Le Petit Bobb his first engagement when he was only little Dominique. It might be possible to obtain employment from him even were it only as ring-attendant and under another name.

Having parted from the two young cavaliers, he was plodding stoutly along the dusty highway between its straight walls of tall planes and poplars when he heard the thundering of hoofs upon the stubble-field that flanked the road and a fresh young voice called upon him to stop. "Monsieur—Monsieur Bobb! Stop, I pray you! We have a request to make to you."

He turned. The girl was close beside him, leaping her horse across the ditch: her brother followed at some little distance, less precipitately.

"I am in everything at your service, Monsieur et Dame," said Le Petit Bobb at his politest.

"It—well—*en effet*—it is like this. We——"

"Stop, madcap!" cried her brother, coming up beside her. "It is unheard of!"

"We wish to ask you if you will honour us by spending the evening with us at our house. You see it over there—in that grove of trees—the Château Pontamadour."

Le Petit Bobb raised his eyebrows and it may be that a thrill of pleasure lifted his heart with them, for even in Republican France—to be the guest of a Marquis—it is to show——!! But his glance fell on his dusty coat and his heart fell with it. "Hélas!! Mademoiselle," he began, with the intention of adding that a prior engagement forbade him the pleasure. But the Marquis interrupted.

"Of course it will be a matter of business," he began. "It is easy to see——" After all he was only a boy and Le Petit Bobb's answering glance reminded him of his manners. "That is to say—er—er—I mean—Monsieur would perhaps not be averse to—to an addition—to—your pardon, Monsieur—to his resources."

Le Petit Bobb allowed his features to relax, but said nothing. Mademoiselle frowned at her brother, but also remained silent.

"After all," went on the boy, grown purple-faced, "we can't all be rich, can we? I—I—there are quite a lot of famous people who are hard-up."

Le Petit Bobb shrugged at once his shoulders and his every feature. "Notoriety does not imply prosperity," he answered, parodying one greater than he. "Dante was forced to beg for credit from a grocer. François Villon chose a simpler way. He robbed all and sundry."

The girl mentally shouldered aside her brother, already about to speak. "Monsieur is an artist," she said, "and as an artist he will understand without offence. It is like this. We have an uncle—a deplorable uncle—worse—an American uncle—*un étranger*."

Le Petit Bobb reflected her smile. "Yet I have heard, Mademoiselle, that to possess an American uncle——" His expressive spine finished the sentence.

"But this one—impossible that you should understand. He is fat and silent—and his face is like a fish—and it is impossible to surprise him——"

"Betty—I implore you——" cried her brother.

"Also he is a *millionnaire*," went on the girl, ignoring the interruption. "So you will understand, Monsieur—Monsieur—I do not know your real name?"

Le Petit Bobb bowed deeply. "I am called Dominique de Llanos de Echevida," he said simply.

I do not know in what romantic moment Le Petit Bobb had selected that name, which certainly was not given him by his godfathers and godmothers. At least he had come firmly to believe that it was his by right of ancestry, as you could have told by his way of saying it.

Mademoiselle Betty clapped her hands triumphantly. "Then I am sure you will understand. No, Raoul, let me speak. It is like Mon-

sieur de Echevida. To-day is my *jour-de-fête*—my saint's day—and my brother here has promised to give me as an *étrenne* anything in the world I wish. I told him that of all things I wish to see some human expression—of surprise—of delight—even of anger, upon the face of this uncle of whom I tell you. Well—you understand?"

It seemed to Le Petit Bobb that her smile was one of the pleasantest he had ever seen.

"But certainly, I understand," he answered readily. "You mean that if one of your guests—a serious, solemn fellow, perhaps a poet—or a banker—were—in the middle of conversation, perhaps in the *salle-à-manger*, to throw for example a double back-somersault from one end of the table to the other, without breaking the plates—or to stand upon his head before him while M. the Uncle was whispering *fleurettes* to his neighbour. It would be droll—certainly it would be droll."

Again the girl clapped her hands delightedly. "Raoul," she cried, "you will keep



"One voice rang out like a bugle call. 'Hulljee!!' cried Mr. Etchermann, springing to his feet so agilely that the gilt sofa was overturned behind him. . . . 'Stop that man!!!' he insisted. 'Stop him, I say! I want him! Fetch him here right now!!'"

your promise even in spite of yourself."

"Or again," continued Le Petit Bobb, "were the poet—or the banker—to run suddenly up the curtains in the salon reciting one of the *rondelles* of Guillem de Cabestangh the Troubadour, using but the one hand and distributing with the other flowers drawn from his bosom. That, I think, should surprise, even astound, M. the Uncle."

"Little Bobb, you are adorable!" cried Betty, and even her brother was visibly impressed.

"There is one thing, however," continued the artist, returning to earth again, "would it be wise, perhaps to offend, perhaps to enrage, this Uncle—this *milliardaire*? Were there an inheritance in question—to jeopardise it——"

is an affair of a guest—not of a paid performer."

Raoul had, after all, a good heart. He bent from his saddle and extended his hand.



"The poet . . . threw half a dozen cartwheels, as many back-somersaults and some amazing bounds round the room. . . . ran up the curtains as agilely as an ape, throwing down handfuls of red roses on his way."

"If you will so far honour my poor house, M. de Echevida," he said.

* * * * *

If you had been privileged to be one of the guests in the great gilded salon of the Château Pontamadour that evening—it is one of the most famous of French show-places, destroyed during the Revolution but magnificently rebuilt in the Neo-Renaissance style by the Marquise Sady (*née* Etchelmann of Kansas City, U.S.A.), mother of the present Marquis de Pontamadour-Saluces—had you been one of the guests, I repeat, you would certainly have been greatly impressed by M. Dominique de Llanos de Echevida, the famous Provençal poet, who was also of the party. You would

"For that matter," said the Marquis, "we are not entirely paupers—*nous autres*. Our mother was the sister——"

"One other thing," said Dominique de Llanos de Echevida, drawing himself up. "It is understood between us that this

have agreed with the rest that, though not exactly handsome, he was a man of striking personality, with extremely mobile and expressive features, that he was a wit and a *causeur* of the first water, and that his knowledge of Provençal poetry both ancient and modern was supreme. His decent suit of black fitted him ill, it is true, and might have been made for another larger man—but we all know how careless of appearances are these poets! Even Mr. Julius O. Etchelmänn, the world-famous financier, was visibly impressed and so far relapsed from his usual Jove-like impassivity as to suggest that the poet be presented to him. Then indeed, as Mademoiselle Marcelle de Pontamadour-Saluces, aunt of the Marquis, sighed ecstatically, did the occasion become historic, hallowed by the meeting of two master-minds, Lords of the Twin Worlds of Romance and Reality. For Mr. Etchelmänn, though scarcely more imposing physically than was the poet—resembling in silhouette the meditative Buddha, with a tremendously square chin, a pale-grey complexion and whatever expression might have lurked in his eyes erased by large tortoiseshell-rimmed spectacles—Mr. Etchelmänn, I say, was also a man of commanding interest as being the tenth—if not the ninth—Richest Man in the World—or for that matter, presumably, the Universe.

Imagine, then, the general gasp, not of bewilderment, but of sheer incredulity, when the poet, honouring the hand which the financier extended to him, stood suddenly on his head on the carpet before the great man's sofa and in that posture shook hands with affable warmth, murmuring complimentary phrases the while.

If it must be admitted that Mr. Etchelmänn's features showed no sign of surprise or embarrassment, it may be attributed to his not unnatural fear that his brain had suddenly failed him, that he was seeing visions and that no sign of his weakness must be allowed to escape him.

But even his self-command was overthrown when, a moment later, the poet, without first resuming an erect attitude, threw half a dozen cartwheels, as many back-somersaults and some amazing bounds round the room, all without touching either the guests or the gilt furniture with which it was overfull—ran up the curtains as agilely as an ape, throwing down handfuls of red roses on his way—hung for a long moment from the curtain-pole, and then, passing

between the curtains, vanished, presumably through a window—that may have been left open for him—and disappeared into the *Ewigkeit*.

Amid the screams of terrified dowagers and the exclamations of less nervous guests, one voice rang out like a bugle call. "Hul-ljeee!!" cried Mr. Etchelmänn, springing to his feet so agilely that the gilt sofa was overturned behind him. And again, "Suffering Snakes!!!" For a moment he paused as though unable to find words to express his tumultuous thoughts, then, even more loudly, if that were possible, "Stop that man!!!" he insisted. "Stop him, I say! I want him! Fetch him here right now!!" Before anyone could reply he also had vanished from the room, though by the more orthodox way of the door.

"He is enraged! He means to kill him! I must part them!" cried the Marquis as he prepared to follow.

"Let me first thank you for your ravishing birthday gift," said his less perturbed sister. "Never have I so enjoyed my fête-day!"

If you are to understand why Mr. Etchelmänn, far from thirsting for Le Petit Bobb's blood, was instead aflame with enthusiasm, you must remember that he was before all things a man of business with fingers in innumerable business pies, one of them being the 'Movies,' or, as we have it, the 'Pictures.' He greatly desired Le Petit Bobb, not to sacrifice him to outraged dignity, but to offer him an immediate engagement, at a salary quite unbelievable when expressed in francs, at a place called Hollywood, which Le Petit Bobb knew only vaguely as being somewhere on the other side of the world, inconceivably remote from the *pays* and everything that it means to a true son of the Midi. For that reason—and perhaps another—Le Petit Bobb flatly rejected the offer—and then indeed Mr. Etchelmänn had homicidal thoughts—and instead, the moment he could escape, continued his journey on foot to Chartres, and there found the Cirque Larrençy and made himself known to his old friend the *patron*, and, under a mutual pledge of the strictest secrecy, obtained a job as stable-attendant at 600 francs a month or so—and was happy.

It may interest you to hear also that it was nearly two years before little Mitzi recovered anything like her former health, and that just about then a wonderful thing happened. An aunt, of whom she had

scarcely heard, died suddenly and Mitzi—greatly wondering—proved to be the sole heiress of a little farm-house and a little orchard and some meadows and some hectares of vineyard, at Ste. Marthe, which is in the very heart of the Midi. And the moment she heard of it she sent for Dominique, who was by that time again prospering, as a Greek equilibrist under the name of Dionysios Paleologos—and he came at

once, and the first thing she said to him was that they must go home at once. He was puzzled and could only answer her, "But, my dear, what do you want with a grandfather?"

"It isn't a grandfather I want," said Mitzi.

So Dominique de Llanos de Echevida really did become a Man of the Midi after all.



AUGUST IN GRINDELWALD CHURCHYARD.

IF far away from England I should die,
 Then let me lie
 In this fair place, where stately mountains stand
 On either hand.

Here in God's garden fragrant roses blow ;
 And far below
 A river sings and sings upon its way,
 By night and day.

About this place the glacier airs blow clear ;
 And, very dear,
 The little chaffinch sings his happy song
 The whole day long.

And, far above, the stainless snowfields lie
 Against the sky :
 God's Peace is brooding o'er this place of rest ;—
 A garden blest.

L. G. MOBERLY.



"She may probably have missed her way in the woods. At any rate, the two of them did not get back until half an hour after they had been expected."

THE DUMPHRY PARTNERSHIPS

◉ ◉ By BARRY PAIN ◉ ◉

◉ ILLUSTRATED BY WILL LENDON ◉

THERE was a feeling in Mr. Dumphy's staff at the office that there was something in the air. Things were not quite as usual. There were minor signs and portents. It was whispered that a change was expected; it was believed that the change would be drastic; its nature was unknown.

Mr. Paton and Miss Welsh lunched together at the Red Tulip—which is quite a good little restaurant—and talked matters over. Mr. Paton was a serious young man and wore tortoiseshell-rimmed spectacles;

he was very clever and understood the care and working of the most complex calculating machines. Miss Welsh was a very efficient secretary and stenographer.

"Then," said Miss Welsh, "you don't think there's anything wrong with the business?"

"I don't think. I know there isn't. It's very much the other way."

"I didn't really suppose there was myself. Still, several times lately he's written quite long letters with his own hand—yes, and posted them himself—and that's a thing

I've never known him do before. And every day now letters come for him marked 'Private.' Something or other is being kept back for some reason or other, and of that I feel quite certain."

"Well, my name's not Nosey Parker, but I've noticed one or two things. Do you remember a Mr. Chesney White who came in yesterday afternoon—tall, smart-looking man of forty? He was with the boss for half an hour I should think."

"Yes, I remember. What about it?"

"Do you know who he is?"

"No."

"Well, it happens that I do. Chesney White is the manager of the company which owns the block where our offices are. In our office we're short of room, as the boss has said openly and often. Now, the other day I was talking to a man from Norringe and Perks who have the floor just above us, and he told me that his people were clearing out next quarter day. That all points to an extension on our part, don't it?"

"It might. But that doesn't explain everything."

Mr. Dumphry's own household also found something to explain. No longer did Mr. Dumphry seem disposed to fly off along the line of any enthusiasm that might offer itself. He seemed more concentrated and even preoccupied. He gave the impression of one with an unfinished job on his mind. Sometimes—and this was quite a new feature—he brought work back with him in the evening, and, lest he should become drowsy, renounced the two or three glasses of claret that he generally drank at dinner, and afterwards retired to his study, from which no sound of harp, viol, sackbut, or gramophone could lure him to dance in the studio.

But his family was not perturbed. Never had Mr. Dumphry shown himself in better temper and spirits. He admitted that he was working hard and that there were things to clear up, but it was obvious that these did not worry him in the least.

Then one night at dinner he made a portentous announcement.

"My dear," he said to Mrs. Dumphry, "we've nothing fixed for Thursday week, have we?"

They had not. The family very rarely had anything fixed for Thursday week.

"Well then," said Mr. Dumphry, "I shall be bringing a young friend of mine down to dine that night. His name's John Elder. He's a young man, but he has some means and position and a good character, and I

think you'll like him. You should. At any rate I do. I want him to meet some of my friends here, so ask Pierce Eveleigh and his wife. We might have that amusing vampire, Eileen, to make the number up to eight."

"Quite a dinner party," said Mrs. Dumphry. "I wonder if we shall be up to it."

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Dumphry. "It need be nothing very elaborate. A few oysters, a sole, a bird, and a sweet would be ample. And of course you could get in a professional waitress. That's simple enough; we've done it before. I'll see after the wine myself."

"Well, we'll do our best," said Mrs. Dumphry. "You've not mentioned this Mr. John Elder before."

"No," said Mr. Dumphry. "It is only quite recently that we've become closely associated. He's got a small car and he says he'll drive me down on Thursday evening. You and the girls can talk to him and amuse him for the few minutes while I'm dressing. Matter of fact, I shall be rather glad to hear what you think of him."

On this important Thursday evening when Mr. Dumphry had changed rapidly and descended to the drawing-room, he found Elder getting on uncommonly well with his wife and daughters. He was a modest and good-looking young man and not only anxious but able to please. He was not by any means without humour, and already seemed to be on jesting terms with Barbara and Queenie. To Queenie the task of preparing the cocktails was now assigned. Mr. and Mrs. Pierce Eveleigh arrived, Mr. Eveleigh wearing a somewhat Byronic necktie, and Mouse, as usual, looking as if she were wearing a new dress for the first time and rather liked it. Eileen followed and got her eyelashes to work all over the place as she generally did. She habitually gave the impression that the person to whom she was talking, particularly if it happened to be a man, was the only person in the world to whom she wished to talk, or had ever wished to talk.

At dinner Mr. Pierce Eveleigh started almost immediately on the subject of Waterloo Bridge. Waterloo Bridge was very much to the fore at the moment. It was not so much a bridge as an epidemic and nearly every architect in the land was down with it. It was said that all of them except two had written letters to the papers on the subject and quite a fair proportion of them, or rather over, had been published.

Mr. Eveleigh illustrated his own theory with that which was before him.

"This," he said, selecting a wine-glass, "is the Strand. Here again"—and he placed his fish-knife in position—"we have the River Thames. Now the whole question seems to me to be perfectly simple."

His plan was quite good, but curiously enough nobody afterwards could remember anything of it.

"That's all there is to say about it," he concluded. "If the matter were placed in my hands, that's what I should do about it."

Meanwhile things had moved on a little and Pierce was using the River Thames on a sole and sipping Chablis from the Strand.

"Really," said Mr. Dumphy, "somebody will have to come to my help. Here's Mouse here telling me that she and every other woman is possessed of miraculous powers."

"Oh, come, I didn't say that exactly," said Mouse. "What I said was that women have got a kind of sixth sense which men never have. Women know things without knowing how they know them. I've got the gift myself. Now could you add up a column of figures without adding them up?"

"No," said Mr. Dumphy, "but I'm only a chartered accountant. Nor could you."

"I don't say I'd get the result exactly. But if somebody else has got the result I very often know whether it's right or wrong without counting up at all. Here's an instance that often happens at the bridge-table. I happen to be standing beside old Mrs. Hoover when she has finished adding up her score and I say, 'My dear, you've got your addition wrong,' although I haven't attempted to count it up myself. And whenever I say that she always has got it wrong. It never fails."

"Perhaps she never gets it right," suggested Eileen. "I have known cases of that."

"Then again," said Mrs. Eveleigh, unperturbed. "I open the week's books. Generally, of course, they are all right. But sometimes there's a mistake and I always know it without counting."

"You must come and give a demonstration of this at my office," said Mr. Dumphy. "I'll have Einstein and the Lord Mayor and a bunch of distinguished bankers to meet you and see it."

"No," said Mouse. "If I were to give a demonstration I couldn't do it at all. I feel that about it. As it is, I don't pretend that I can always do it. I only say I very often can."

"I think you're quite right," said Mrs. Dumphy. "I am a little bit that way myself. We had a young gardener here, the man that we still have. I couldn't help feeling that there was something going on. Mind, I'd heard nothing and I'd seen nothing, but I went up to him one day and said: 'Porter, I think you're going to get married.' And he confessed it at once. Now Ernest had seen quite as much of the man as I had, if not more, and yet the idea had never even occurred to him. Then there was a case of a cook many years ago. She applied for the place here. Splendid testimonials and everything seemed satisfactory. Then she came for her personal interview and I saw at once that she was dishonest. I didn't keep her here more than two or three minutes. I made some excuse why she would not suit and got rid of her. I never saw her again."

"Then, my dear," said Mr. Dumphy, "how did you know she was dishonest?"

"I cannot tell you how. I did know. That is what's so wonderful about it."

"Look here, Elder," said Mr. Dumphy, "aren't you going to support our sex? It's no good asking Mr. Eveleigh because he's frightened."

"No," said Elder, "I've nothing for you. I think probably Mrs. Dumphy's quite right. Women notice a great deal more than men do. Very often they notice unconsciously and when the net result comes into consciousness the process has been forgotten."

"Sounds like a piece out of psycho-analysis," said Eileen sweetly.

After dinner Mr. Dumphy's married daughter and her husband arrived, and due consideration was given to the 1900 port. And then all went over to dance at the studio. It was a great night, and was kept up, so to speak, till all hours. At any rate, it was a quarter past eleven before the last guest, John Elder, left, the tail light of his car being watched out of sight by the assembled family.

Barbara and Queenie, happy and weary, went up to bed. But that debauchee, Dumphy, was insatiable. He carried off his wife to the study, mixed for himself a whisky-and-soda, and lit a cigar. Mrs. Dumphy took a drink of precisely the same kind but for the omission of the whisky.

"Well, now, Ernest," said Mrs. Dumphy, a little anxiously, "how do you think it all went?"

"Splendidly. You had everything well thought out and well arranged, as you always

do. Apart from that, what did you think of my friend, John Elder?"

"A young man in a thousand," said Mrs. Dumphy. "Polite and attentive to everybody, and in spite of that seeming to be enjoying himself all the time. But everybody liked him. And as for his looks, you should have heard what Barbara and Eileen had to say."

"Yes," said Mr. Dumphy, "and he also has some very solid qualities. I'm glad you liked him. I'm now going to tell you a little piece of news which so far I have told nobody else—I shall very shortly be taking John Elder into partnership in my business."

"Well," Mrs. Dumphy said resignedly, "that must be for you to say. I am sure you have good reasons. The great reduction in our income must be met in a proper way and without any grumbling."

"I don't understand," said Ernest. "So far as I know, there will be no reduction of our income, and there is every probability that there will be a considerable increase."

"But how can that be? I have never gone deeply into business, but even as a girl I did well in simple arithmetic. At present you have all the profits from the business, haven't you?"

"Certainly."

"But if you make this Mr. Elder a partner, then, as the word implies, he takes a part, whether it's a half or a quarter or whatever it is. And of course he takes it from you. It seems surprising you never thought of that."

Mr. Dumphy showed magnificent patience and restraint.

"But," he said, "a man who wishes to get a partnership expects to pay for it in one way or another—money, or the introduction of new business, or something like that. John Elder will introduce a great deal of new business of the very first class—his father is a recently-retired banker and the connection is very good."

"Then," said Mrs. Dumphy triumphantly, "if he's already got this business, why does he want yours?"

Further exemplary patience on the part of Mr. Ernest Dumphy. He presented an obvious consideration.

"You see, my dear," he said cheerfully, "when two men are in the same business, it saves money if, instead of working separately, they work together. It saves in office-rent, staff salaries, lighting and heating—many such ways. It comes to a good deal in a year."

"I suppose so," said Mrs. Dumphy. "It really gave me rather a shock at first—in fact, you might have said all that before. Anyhow, I feel now that I can safely leave it all to you."

"Yes, yes," said Ernest, "there's no need for you to worry about these little business arrangements. Now next Wednesday John Elder wants us all to lunch with him at the Blitz Grill-room and go on to a *matinée* afterwards."

"It would be delightful. But he is a young man, and it would be very expensive for him. Ought we?"

"He's not so lamentably young—he's thirty-three, though certainly he looks younger. I know something of his affairs and I think I can promise you that he can very well afford that—and a good deal more, if there were any occasion."

"In that case it's very kind and nice of him. We should be glad to come of course."

"And I was to ask you what play you would prefer."

"Not Shakespeare. He was the best and greatest, of course, and it's not for me to say. But when you get as much Shakespeare at school as I did, it destroys the taste for it. Eileen was speaking very highly of that new piece 'Flim-Flam' to-night. However, I'll ask the girls, and see what they would prefer."

The clock on the mantelpiece struck the inevitable hour.

"Dear me!" said Dumphy, as he finished his drink. "This is a dissipation. This won't do at all. I want to be at the office by ten sharp to-morrow. However, it's not every night that one announces the approach of a new partner. Tell the girls? Certainly. By all means. It was merely that I wished you to be the first to hear of it. And by the way you can ask John Elder here nowadays as often as you like—quite informally—lunch or supper on Sundays—an impromptu dance at any time—tennis when the summer comes—anything, in fact."

"I see what you mean," said Mrs. Dumphy, "and of course I shall do what you wish, and I like this John Elder very much, and he's an excellent dancer. Still, Ernest, you must really think what you're doing. Do you want it or do you not want it? Because, if you don't, it would be far better to break off all these social engagements as soon as possible."

"Upon my soul," said Dumphy, genuinely and honestly, "I've not got the

slightest idea what you're talking about."

"Surely, you must have seen that John Elder was in love with Queenie—very much in love with Queenie—and that she in her way was very fond of him. If he is to come here frequently, there will certainly be an engagement between them. You may not wish that."

Mr. Dumphy sat down again suddenly.

"I never heard such nonsense!" he exclaimed. "So far as I know, the two never met before to-night."

"So far as I know, they never did. But what's that got to do with it? These things happen."

"I grant they're possible, but they don't happen very often. If there'd been anything at all in what you say, I feel quite certain I should have noticed it. To begin with, he danced more with you than he did with Queenie."

"Yes," said Mrs. Dumphy, "that's true. It was one of the things that struck me."

"Still, let us be reasonable. As a matter of fact, I asked Queenie directly what she thought of John Elder and all she said was: 'He's all right. Dances well too.' Nothing there to show great love or admiration or anything, was there?"

"No," said Mrs. Dumphy. "But then you know what girls are, or ought to know. If they really feel anything very much they hardly ever say it. For that matter, Queenie never even mentioned the man's name to me. When Barbara and Eileen were raving about the man's good looks she turned away and yawned as if it were not a thing that interested her."

"Very likely. No doubt. That would seem to me to show that he really did not interest her."

"You men," said Mrs. Dumphy, "you're so clever—in most ways you're far cleverer than I. I never could take your place in



"And perhaps his hand and Miss Dumphy's remained clasped a few seconds longer than convention strictly required."

the City. And yet in the simplest things so many of you seem to me to be like babies. There was a lot of truth in what Mouse said at dinner about a woman having a sixth sense. I may not be able to tell you exactly how I know it, but I do know it. Unless you take the strongest measures possible and take them at once, John Elder

and Queenie will be man and wife. I say that definitely and you may laugh at me afterwards if I am wrong. In fact I should say that they arrived at some beginning of an understanding together even this evening."

"Well," said Mr. Dumphy, "can you at any rate tell me what you're going on?"

surprising, Ernest, that you, with daughters of your own, don't know better. Besides, you've seen other couples get engaged and get married. You must have noticed that there is a way in which a man looks at only one woman, and that's the woman he loves. And the same thing's true about the woman too."



"Mr. Dumphy suggested the name of the London terminus to which they should be driven. 'Why?' said John. 'This chap knows your address, and will drive you up to your own doorstep with pleasure.'"

You can't say that a girl's fallen in love with a man simply because she does not show the slightest sign of interest in him. And as for the man, I've already told you that he seemed to be paying much more attention to some of the others than he did to Queenie."

"That's all on the surface," said Mrs. Dumphy. "That means nothing. If Queenie had shown an enormous enthusiasm for John Elder to-night I wouldn't have given him a farthing for his chances. It's

"Never seen anything of the kind," said Dumphy. "However, it doesn't matter. If I'm right and there's nothing whatever between John Elder and Queenie, I shall be quite satisfied."

"And suppose there is?"

"Well, I wasn't looking for anything of the kind, but if there is—I say if—then I should be rather more than satisfied."

"And that was all I wanted to know," said Mrs. Dumphy. "Why couldn't you

have said that before? Because, of course, it's no good arguing that I don't know a thing when I really do know it. There couldn't be. And now we really must go up to bed."

Next morning Mr. Dumphy did his best to dismiss the subject from his mind. He was profoundly satisfied with Mrs. Dumphy. She understood and practised the art of housekeeping to perfection. He was very fond of her. But still Mr. Dumphy was a business man and did not believe in any of this rubbish about a sixth sense. Mrs. Dumphy's first observations on the subject of his partnership with John Elder had not shown any deep grasp of the situation, and it was quite possible that she was no better versed in the love-affairs of other people. But, he had to acknowledge, if she knew nothing in this respect, he himself knew just about as much.

Next day he saw John Elder at his office in the morning and also in the afternoon. At the first meeting John Elder made a pleasant allusion to Mr. Dumphy's "charming family." But what less could a polite man have done? By the end of the afternoon Mr. Dumphy was quite disposed to dismiss his wife's ideas from his mind and to believe that there was nothing whatever in them.

With regard to some at least of the impending changes Mr. Dumphy now abandoned any attempt at secrecy. There was no longer any necessity for it, for all arrangements had now been definitely fixed. In a few days the arrival of workmen would prevent any possibility of it.

Miss Welsh arrived for luncheon at her customary table at the Red Tulip.

"Shall I turn down a chair for your gentleman-friend?" asked the waitress. She was quite aware that Mr. Paton's name was Paton, but ever preferred what she considered the more genteel expressions.

"Do, please," said Miss Welsh, absorbed in the bill-of-fare.

She had hardly made her selection before Mr. Paton arrived. With a pleased expression in the eyes behind the big glasses, he looked like a triumphant owl.

"Do you remember," asked Mr. Paton, "that some days ago we spoke of impending changes at the office?"

"Oh, yes. What about it?"

"Well, without breaking any confidence, I am now in a position to tell you that my forecast was correct to the smallest detail. We are taking over Norringe and Perks's

place, and connecting up with our own office by building our own private staircase on the inside. Norringe and Perks are leaving a fortnight before their time, and then the new staircase is to be put in and the whole place redecorated. And of course there will be furniture to buy and so on, and one way or another I should say that it was going to cost somebody something. You can depend on my information, for I've just had it direct from the boss."

"Yes. Very likely. He told me all about it when I was taking the letters about two hours ago. I suppose you don't know anything about this Mr. John Elder who seems to be at the office pretty well all day and every day now."

"I shouldn't like to say that I actually knew anything. I might have formed my own theory, but it's no use to talk about that, is it?"

"Not a bit," said Miss Welsh disappointingly.

The only guest outside the Dumphy family at John Elder's luncheon party was his father, the recently retired banker. Mr. Dumphy had met him often before. A white-haired, genial man of a little over sixty, the ex-banker now lived for the most part in the country, where he divided his time pleasantly between the golf-course and his own excellent library.

The father was Mr. Elder. The son was therefore addressed as Mr. John Elder, though it took time. On one occasion Barbara, speaking hurriedly and without care, addressed him simply as John, and was instantly apologetic, and somewhat confused.

"Don't you worry about it, Barbara," said John Elder. "I like it."

"Looks to me, Barbara," said her father, smiling, "as if you were developing the manners of what in my young days was called a forward minx."

"Don't," said Barbara. "Take me home and bury me."

"It's my fault really, Barbara," said the elder Elder. "If I were not alive, this would never have happened. I shall take the privilege of the aged and address you as Barbara always."

"Please do," said Barbara fervently.

John Elder was an excellent host. As Mr. Dumphy took his place in one of the two cars that were waiting to take them to the theatre, he decided definitely that Mrs. Dumphy was wrong. There now seemed to be a possibility that it might be Barbara—yes, Mr. Dumphy was not blind. Oh,

no! But Queenie had been more quiet than usual.

Slowly the car rolled along Piccadilly. Mr. Dumphry chatted pleasantly with his wife, and Barbara, and with the elder Elder. It did not occur to the innocent man that the car immediately behind him would be occupied by John Elder and Miss Queenie Dumphry, *enfin seuls*. But Mrs. Dumphry missed nothing.

Mr. John Elder was an excellent host. But with all the money and good-will in the world you cannot expect to secure six adjacent seats in the third row of the stalls, at a very popular revue, at very short notice. The utmost that John had been able to accomplish—so he said, apologetically—was four adjacent seats in the third row and two adjacent seats in a row some way back. Naturally, he insisted on taking for himself one of the inferior seats—Queenie accompanied him in the other. And Mr. Dumphry began to realise that the judgments of his wife were not wholly to be despised.

After the theatre the elder Elder had to rush off to catch his train. The remaining five packed themselves into a car which did not hold more than six comfortably, and went off to tea at the bottom of St. James's Street. Naturally, at tea they talked much of the play, of which John and Queenie, though they did their best to join in the talk, seemed to have been deficient in observation.

"Must have been asleep the whole time," said Barbara contemptuously.

That car was still waiting when they came out again.

"And your own little car," said Mrs. Dumphry to her host, "do you generally take it out for a run on Sundays?"

"Almost always," said John.

"I wonder," she said, "if you'd care to run over for Sunday luncheon—just the usual family sort of luncheon—next Sunday."

"Care to? I should simply love it."

"Then that's settled. You've given us all a most lovely time," said Mrs. Dumphry as she stepped into the car.

"Yes, indeed," said Mr. Dumphry. "You've entertained us nobly."

And Barbara cordially repeated the same expression of gratitude, and Queenie said nothing whatever. Mr. Dumphry suggested the name of the London terminus to which they should be driven.

"Why?" said John. "This chap knows your address, and will drive you up to your

own doorstep with pleasure. I've bought him by the day anyhow, and so you're practically stealing my money if you don't use him. Good-bye everybody. Good-bye, Miss Dumphry."

And perhaps his hand and Miss Dumphry's remained clasped a few seconds longer than convention strictly required.

On the way back Mr. and Mrs. Dumphry and Barbara chatted with animation. Queenie lay back with her eyes closed.

And after a while Mrs. Dumphry touched Queenie's knee.

"Not over-tired, darling, are you?" she asked.

Queenie opened her eyes and smiled seraphically. "Not the least bit tired, Mummie," she said. "Just heavenly happy and thinking about things." And the long-lashed eyes closed once more.

That night as Mr. and Mrs. Dumphry sat in the study she said with a sudden challenge:

"Well now, and which of us is right?"

"I couldn't say," said Mr. Dumphry, who had at all events to keep his self-respect. "There certainly did seem to be indications that John Elder desired the society of Queenie. That I admit fully. But Queenie is polite to everybody. There was nothing whatever to show that she was anxious for the society of John."

"It's wonderful," said Mrs. Dumphry, "how quite clever men like you don't seem to see a single thing. However, John Elder will be down again on Sunday and I hope that you'll leave it to me."

"Certainly, yes, by all means," said Mr. Dumphry. "Of course, we don't want to seem to be absolutely chucking Queenie at him."

"No," said Mrs. Dumphry, "but that doesn't come in in this case, my dear. Just leave it to me. This is one of the things that I really do understand."

Mrs. Dumphry made no plans whatever except as regards food. She considered it extremely probable that John Elder would stay to supper if pressed, and she made her arrangements accordingly. For the rest she relied on her unaided instinct.

John Elder arrived at twelve on Sunday morning, a little apologetic, but saying that he had managed to get through the traffic rather quicker than he had expected.

"That's splendid," said Mrs. Dumphry. "I wonder if you'd care to give one of the girls a little run round in your car before lunch."

"Why, that would be delightful," said John. "I'll start her up again."

"Barbara," called Mrs. Dumphry. There was no answer.

"What on earth is that girl doing?" said Mrs. Dumphry. "Perhaps you wouldn't mind taking Queenie."

"I should love to," said John.

He took her and he was ten minutes late for lunch. But the fact that he had picked up a puncture and had to change a wheel was quite enough to account for that.

In the afternoon it appeared that Mr. Dumphry and Queenie were the only two people who could guide John Elder on the track through Derstham Woods, which, Mrs. Dumphry observed, were far too beautiful to be missed.

Mr. Dumphry himself frankly pleaded a tendency on the part of the middle-aged to drop asleep after luncheon on Sunday. This plea not being available to Queenie, she nobly volunteered for the task. She may probably have missed her way in the woods. At any rate, the two of them did not get back until half an hour after they had been expected. It took very little pressure to induce John Elder to remain to supper.

And now Mr. Dumphry really was impressed. He had known that Elder was engaged to a man for golf that morning and lunch afterwards and that he was engaged again for a dinner-party that night. But then Mr. Elder was on the telephone and thoroughly understood the use of it in all times of difficulty and adversity.

On the following Tuesday evening John Elder and Mr. Dumphry sat together in Mr. Dumphry's office.

"Well," said Mr. Dumphry, "everything has been settled to the last detail. At eleven to-morrow in this office we sign the Deed and I hope you'll permit me to say that I shall welcome you very heartily as my partner."

"Yes," said Elder, "yes."

He rose from his chair and paced the room as he talked. "There's just one more thing, Dumphry," he said, "and it wouldn't be fair not to say it. I needn't tell you what my position is. You've gone into that very properly already. I want to marry your daughter Queenie at once. You may perhaps have guessed it."

"There seemed to me to be some sort of possibility," said Mr. Dumphry, speaking slowly. "I don't think there is anybody that I should prefer for her. But you must remember that your acquaintance with her is very brief."

"I wanted her the first time I saw her," said Elder, "and I've wanted her more and more ever since. I always shall do. I'm not telling you that I'm worthy of her in any way. I don't suppose any man is. Still, there it is. What do you think?"

"I couldn't put any compulsion on Queenie in anything of this kind."

"In this case," said John, "I think perhaps I may say that it wouldn't be necessary."

"Got as far as that, have you?" asked Mr. Dumphry.

He walked over to the window and looked out.

"That's your car there, isn't it?"

"It is."

"Well, I think it would be all right, but you might like to have a word with my wife first. How would it be if you drove me down and stayed to supper?"

"Absolutely perfect," said John. "Just half a minute."

He was already engaged for that evening, but he drew the telephone towards him and therein uttered one of the most monumental lies that the Recording Angel ever wiped out with a tear.

"Now we're ready," he said.

In a few seconds they were away in the car, and Mr. Dumphry's forecast was correct. It was very much all right.



THE MAN WITH : THE GUNS :

By DOUGLAS NEWTON

ILLUSTRATED BY J. R. SKELTON

THERE was a sharp "psht" in the green silence, a tiny peck from the surface of a sapling. In the smooth olive of the trunk gleamed a spot of quivering scarlet . . . the feathers of a blow-pipe dart!

The man, who moved crouching and stumbling along the hunter track, came to life. He sprang behind the sapling with surprising nimbleness for one so bulky. A pistol leapt into his hand like a thing alive. For one instant he listened, but the jungle seemed devoid of sound or life. He laid his pistol against the trunk in line with the slant of the dart; he fired.

From the black heart of the bush came a scream, agonised and yet astonished; and sixty feet away, entirely hidden from the man by the lianas and darkness, a body crashed through branches and into the undergrowth. The man went back to the gutter of the trail. He showed no emotion at the brilliance of his shot. Emotionlessly he continued his dead, automatic lurch forward.

He had the air of a man nearly at the limits of his endurance. His face was drawn under the caking of dirt, sweat and blood. He no longer bothered to brush away the insects that bit and burrowed into his skin. He made no attempt to dodge the thorns that tore at his clothing, even then in rags. When they scored deep gashes in the stark white flesh his tattered garments exposed, he paid no attention but stumbled doggedly on. There was something more than mere resolution in his gait. His eyes, puffy from strain and tropic heat, and looking out from a face curiously fine and curiously immobile, seemed unwinkingly fixed on some goal ahead. He seemed dead to his surroundings, dead to anything but that visionary urge that drove him waveringly onward.

Another dart whizzed by his face with venomous intent. His eyes examined the track, he lurched three steps forward and collapsed with a crash. It was the fall of a man smitten with sudden death; nevertheless, he fell well under a dense bush of thorns that forbade approach from behind, and he twisted on to his back as he fell.

The jungle was deadly silent for some minutes, then a bird called. The call was repeated from several points in the wall of gloom. Presently, a group of naked brown men appeared on and about the hunter track. All stared at the fallen man. Not even the breath of life showed in him. The Indians grouped together and approached him.

Immediately the fallen man's wrists, but wrists only, flicked upward. The jungle became hideous with the crash of two pistols firing rapidly. The pack of Indians melted in a startling way. Those who could fled screaming into the bush. Three or four only gained it, and the man stood up and fired after them as they went.

When he had run through the two magazines, he stood, stocky and grim, listening. He heard the distant crashing of undergrowth under the feet of the terrified Indians. He showed no elation. With his back well guarded by the thorn-bush, he swung round a heavy pack so that his hand could reach its opening. With his eyes steady on the prone Indians he reloaded both pistols before approaching them.

He had killed seven. Another man might have been proud of the beauty of the shooting. This man took that for granted. The only interest he had in his victims was for the wallet one carried. It contained food. He took this and ate as he staggered on. It was characteristic of him that, though he carried a heavy haversack, there was no food in it, only cartridges. Those

cartridges, two pistols and his strange determined ruthlessness were his sole stock-in-trade for facing the terrors of what was almost virgin jungle.

had also been warned that he himself would not come out alive. He had ignored both warnings. He had that nature. There was something he wanted up beyond the Anyi at Piedron in the foothills, and what he wanted he went after and took. His steady blue eyes fixed themselves westward and he went on, driving his men with his queer, unbending determination. There was need of hurry. Two other men were coming after him, intent on getting this thing he meant to get.

His carriers had tried to murder him as they travelled further and their fear grew. He had shot one of them and the



"He took one stride back from her, eyes staring, pistol dropping limply."

He had started out with more, two canoes and a party of carriers. The carriers had begun to revolt when they learnt that they were heading for the Anyi lands. The man knew they would do that. He had been warned that no river-man—half-caste or Indian—would venture into the country of the Anyi killers and cannibals. He

others had gone on, coerced by the strange, cold power of this man. Only after weeks of marching did they manage to put powdered sleep-leaf into his food, and as he

slept had bolted. They might have killed him for his weapons, but they were too terrified of him to touch him.

He was a man of the *campos*; flat grass cattle plains were his natural habitat, that is, when he was not living the curious life of South American cities. The bush was a thing strange to him, and it ought to have been terrifying, only nothing terrified this man. Once he had set his mind to a thing he went forward to it; not fear, discomfort or even pity would stop him, only death. He had been told of the scores of ways

close ahead, nothing was going to prevent him reaching Piedron.

Late one afternoon the solid massiness of the jungle gloom began to break up.



"He had forgotten the throwing thongs, the *bolos*."

death could beat even a tried man in the forest as he had been told of the Anyi. He ignored these things. At a point to the west beyond this bush and beyond the Anyi was Piedron and the thing he meant to make his own. With his air of on-pressing and overpowering determination he made for it alone. He had been in danger of death from the Anyi for two days. He had beaten them as he had a way of beating death. The fever and enervation of the swampy jungle had almost sapped his remarkable physical powers. But not quite. He did not know how to yield. He drove his body on. Piedron must be

Sunlight blared through in shafts and patches of savage gold, and these openings in the leafy vault increased. Other trails turned into the one he was following and it expanded from a narrow gutter to a broad band of earth stamped flat by naked feet. In time he halted in a glade where there was a clear stream. He drank and, bringing down a parrot on the wing with a snapshot, scuffled a patch of grass free of snakes and made a fire. He had half roasted the bird when he heard something that sounded like a heavy and erratic heart-beat. It was the *iuary*, a drum made from a long hollow trunk and beaten by the Indians for signalling—and war.

He stamped out his fire, moved forward along the track for half a mile. When he found a huge cow tree he climbed it, laboriously and doggedly, by means of the network of *cipos* (vines) that meshed it to its fellows. He carried the half-cooked bird in his teeth as he climbed. Secure in the foliage of the towering summit, he sat tearing at the flesh of the bird and staring westward. Within a mile the forest faded into the green of grass and the grass curved into easy foothills. Beyond was the pearl and purple gloom of the mountains. He ate and stared unexcited, though he knew he had come to his journey's end. That rich land must be Piedron, the land where a white man lived, but which no outside white man had seen or entered for twenty years.

He turned his eyes from the hills to where threads of smoke lifted above the tree-tops. That meant a camp, and it was between him and the hills. It was there to keep him from the hills. The Condons of Piedron were jealous of their lordship, and barred out intruders. The Anyi who were friendly with old Condon had carried word of his coming, and the Condons had come to turn him back from their precious fastness. His eyes did not glimmer either in anger or amusement—or fear. He tossed the bones of the parrot where they would not fall on the path and give him away, netted himself secure into a crutch of a branch with creeper rope, and went to sleep.

II.

As the mists of dawn were clearing he approached the camp. The people in it were astir and preparing the morning meal. He saw half-castes in wide trousers, ponchos and the spurs of horsemen. He saw, what he expected to see, Anyi Indians round the fire, but the thing that fixed his attention was a tent. It was a dirty old tent, but it was white-man canvas. It both surprised him and conveyed a message. It told him the Condons were on the spot; the tent belonged to them; there was no other white man here. He was surprised because it was unnatural to burden oneself with a tent in such a climate, a blanket was all a man needed. He supposed, however, it fitted in with those old tales he had heard of Condon's character. He was rather a nabob up here where no other whites came; he ruled this tract, between the jungle and the mountains, with all the gestures of a

king. That tent was such a gesture, it kept him apart from the common herd.

The man's mouth became a little grim. He was going to be rather damaging to kingship; he was going to be something of a king-maker himself very soon. He thought:

"How shall I fling myself upon estancia hospitality? Those Anyi have talked about me, and Condon is down here to deal with me. Directly I show myself there'll be yelling and guns popping and no chance for a plausible lie about my being on my uppers and lost while wandering about for work. . . . And I'm not at war until I know for sure. . . ."

His steady face frowned, he examined the camp. The Indians were eating, their arms away from them but close-handly. The peons were round the fire away from their saddles, their guns, and even their lariats. He'd have half a minute to himself before any liveliness started. He moved round behind the bushes closer to the tent. He saw his plan.

Condon himself, perhaps young Condons with him, the twenty-year-old stories had given him a wife—were in that tent. Let him get close up to them and he could command the situation, for nobody would risk a shot for fear of hitting Condon. Let him have a minute's talk and he'd win. The steady eyes in the fine unemotional face twinkled. He guessed he wouldn't be fair to his reputation if he didn't have them all in his hand in no time.

He watched the flap of the tent like a cat. The moment it jerked he was moving. Three strides and he was standing before it, facing the stripling who stepped out of it. The stripling was a tall, slight reed of a fellow, a leggy boy with nothing to him as a husky. Condon's son, of course, but that made no difference. He was in command.

He heard yelping and scurrying behind him, but he betrayed no emotion. If anything happened it would happen even more painfully to Condon's son. The muzzle of his pistol was jabbing hard against the boy's breast and they all must have heard something about that pistol from the Anyi. He said in his even and rather pleasant voice:

"Forgive my roughness. But those infernal Indians have been trying——"

He stopped limply. He stared at where his pistol pressed into the shirt, at the smooth, swelling fullness on each side of it. He

stared at the face, smooth and oval with soft lips, a little parted in astonishment and fear. He stared and his brows drew together, angrily he snatched off the strippling's hat. A cry broke from him as he saw the golden glint of the neatly coiled hair.

"A girl!" he cried bitterly. "Where's Condon?"

"Condon—my father?" she said, surprised. "He's been dead for five years."

"Who else is—"

"There is no one else," she answered. "I am alone here."

He fell back from her. It was a blow in the face. He had counted on there being men, men he would have to fight to take what he meant to take. To find a girl in command—

He took one stride back from her, eyes staring, pistol dropping limply—and something struck him; thongs whirling with the impetus of the stones at their end wound round him like the coiling arms of an octopus. He had forgotten the throwing thongs, the *bolos*. He strove to jerk his pinioned arms free, the stone at the end of one of the thongs smashed against his jaw, and he went down—and went out.

He woke in a tall, cool room, simple and graceful—Spanish-built. He was in bed, there were cool sheets. He tried to sit up and the girl was beside him—real girl now. She wore a lavender silk dress, old-fashioned but charming.

"Better now?" she asked.

"How under heaven did I ever take *you* for a boy?" he said, more in wonderment at himself than at her.

She blushed—how good it was to see a woman who blushed—and said gently: "I always ride like that. My father thought it wisest."

The man remembered: "He's dead, you said?"

"Yes."

"Any—brothers?" he asked.

"None," she said softly. "I am alone. I have an old nurse and an old Mayordomo; that is all."

Cupidity glowed within him. Only this girl—it was going to be easier than he had bargained. A sitter . . . yet he wondered why he felt a sense of discomfort. Because she was a woman? He sneered at himself. He'd never taken what he wanted from a woman before, because the need had not arisen. What difference did it make when there was a fortune to be had?

Only a fool allowed sentiment to interfere with a cash deal, and he was not a fool. Besides, the pair coming up behind him wouldn't be so squeamish. They wouldn't bother about this woman—even if she was pretty and a kid. . . . He had risked his neck to beat them at their own trick and it was up to him to get in first. And then this was too big to miss, and he was out for the big thing. He had sworn that he would make his pile and make it quick and go home and show them. . . . What was a mere chit of a girl to a man of his determination.

The girl's eyes were on his. They were blue like his own. Queer, steady, staunch eyes, and yet there was a gentleness in them. It was absurd to feel mean before them, but—

"You're not in pain now?" she asked, seeing something in his face. He reddened, for he knew that she had seen the meanness in his face.

"I'm not the sort to worry about that," he said. "Men of my toughness . . ."

"But you must have suffered a lot," she cried. "You—you seemed torn to pieces. We did what we could with the scratches and bites, but we only had native herbs. . . ."

Only then did he realise that he had been washed and tended and put to bed. He reddened once more. The girl went on. "I think you'll be all right, though. Medicine was one of the things my father insisted on my learning. I'm the doctor to the whole of Piedron, and my old nurse is very clever too."

"What's your name?" he asked abruptly. "Elizabeth . . . Elizabeth Condon."

She looked at him.

"Oh, mine's Mahan," he growled. "Luke Mahan, a nobody's name."

She laughed. "You're somebody to me. Do you know you're the first white man, the first man of my own sort, I've seen for seven years—apart from my father?"

Again he reddened. Why did she twist him at every turn like that? Of her own sort—if she knew what the name of Luke Mahan stood for in the world! And yet she had sized him up with an uncannily accurate instinct. He *had* been her own sort—of decent birth and good schooling, what was called a gentleman. . . . He closed his eyes. He did not want to look at her, dare not, perhaps. Her own sort . . . if he thought of that it made what he was going to do appear low-down,

and he was not going to be swayed by *that*.

Seeing his eyes close she thought him tired and stole from the room. He heard the lightness of her footfall and the strange, new rustle of her dress. He clenched his fists under the sheets and cursed the acuteness of his hearing.

He woke at dawn and lay thinking. With morning the cold steel of his nature was in command. He was not going to be a fool. He had, in his hands, the *coup* of his life, and he was not going to be put off. If it had been a man, there would have been no hesitation, no, not even if it came to shooting up the fellow. . . . For business purposes this girl must rank as a man. There was no room for sex in business. He rose, firm-lipped and ruthless, and had all his relentlessness knocked out of him at once, for the first things he saw were his holstered belt, the two pistols in it and his haversack of cartridges. They hung over a chair where fresh clothes had been placed. . . . He could almost have shaken the girl in his anger. She had disarmed him by returning his arms.

He put on the clothes; they were old-fashioned but of fine stuff. They smelt of camphor. . . . Old Condon's, of course. He recognised that old Condon must have been a figure of a man, taller than himself, yet not a whit less bulky in shoulder. He obtained a curious, dual emotion from those clothes: a sort of kinship with old Condon and a sort of hardness too. Old Condon had come out here, where no other white man dared to come, and he had conquered and held what he wanted by the strength of his hands and the power of his personality . . . just what Luke Mahan meant to do.

He walked into the great *sala* where breakfast was waiting, and the resolution in him stiffened. There were many ornaments about, crudely fashioned by a local worker. They had a certain naïf artistry, but that was not the thing that attracted him . . . they were of gold. It was true, then, about the gold.

Elizabeth Condon came in, dressed as a boy again, a slim, very gallant, strangely appealing figure. And she was so friendly. There was almost a terrible attraction in the charm of that *tête-à-tête* breakfast. And he learnt things; for instance, the coffee came from the estate, but the cups . . .

"Not from Losarinas," she explained, answering his question. "We never go out that way. It is too long, too difficult and

too dangerous. The crockery came from Peru . . . we go out that way, when we want to."

"But this isn't Peru?" he said. He knew it was not, but he wanted to find out if she was ignorant.

"No, we are well inside the Losarinas border here," she smiled, and added: "For what it is worth."

"The laws of Losarinas are yours," he said with meaning.

"On paper," she laughed, "and I suppose they're binding for contracts and wills. In practice they don't exist. No one save you has ever dared to come through the jungle or by the Anyi since my father and mother came through."

"You know nothing about events in Losarinas?" he asked steadily.

"Not a thing. It's simply not worth bothering about."

"Yet you belong to the Republic."

"In theory," she laughed again. "We're even supposed to be under the jurisdiction of the Magistrado of Varaly . . . Do you know Varaly? Perhaps you came through it . . . ?"

Did he know Varaly? He looked at her grimly. He had stopped purposely at Varaly, and, for a consideration, made the very Magistrado she spoke of swear him in as a Sheriff and Notary at Law for the very purpose of carrying that law to Piedron.

"You don't fear the Magistrado of Varaly?" he asked evenly.

"Fear?" Her voice carried surprise. "Why fear? We are law-abiding here."

"That counts little in Losarinas," he said sardonically. "They invent new laws to catch the law-abiding. Their Magistrados flourish on them . . . unless carefully handled."

"Carefully handled?"

"Well, prevented from enforcing new, predatory laws by bribes."

Her fine face expressed disgust: "Thank goodness we are outside that sort of thing. No Magistrado of Varaly will ever dare the jungle and the Anyi."

He said deliberately—he must lead up to the thing he had come to do: "I may be a Magistrado myself."

"That would alter things," she laughed. "A Magistrado of your type would be welcomed."

He scowled within himself at that. Why did she laugh and treat him as a friend? Why didn't she fear him . . . ?

During the rest of the meal he turned

his eyes away from the gold ornaments, forbade himself speaking of them.

He rode out with her over her lands. It was a beautiful estate, rolling hills and good grass, with water sparkling everywhere. There were big herds and some fine horses. The old Mayordomo rode with them, sullen and inimical to Mahan the stranger, until the plainsman in Mahan found it necessary to praise. Then the interest of both cattlemen came together and they talked, one forgetting his suspicion, the other his object. Mahan talked of the new ideas in herding and breeding on the *pampas*, and the old man listened with intelligence.

"This is new to me," he said, rolling a cigarette, "it is good. You must show me, Señor. We are a little out of touch here."

"But you trade your cattle and produce in Peru?" said Mahan.

"At a town just over the border, that is all," said the man, "and that only once a year. We sell, we buy what we need and we return."

"Don't you feel out of the world?"

"But why?" asked the man. "We have all we want, we are happy; can one ask more?"

Elizabeth Condon said much the same thing.

"Yes, I have been to Peru several times. I have been to Lima, but I have always been glad to return to Piedron."

"Don't you hanker after a bigger life?"

"Why?" she smiled. "I'm happy here, there's work to do, and I have all I need to keep me content." She waved her hands to the beautiful land. "Can the world give me anything much better than that?"

Mahan stared at the lands and the cattle, the whole vision of quiet well-doing, prosperity and order. He found it difficult to deny her. The gold—what would the gold buy him?—high living and pomposity in a stuffy city among greedy people. He shut his mouth tight.

Presently, she told him: "Perhaps I am the daughter of my father. He loved this, and taught me to love it. He had a bitter time back home, he and my mother. He was a man of intelligence and birth and fortune. He wanted to do big things, but he was tricked and cheated. He lost all his money, had to work meanly, live meanly, had all his gifts and his intelligence stultified. He could not bear it, so he came out here..."

Mahan stared at her sombrely as she spoke. She might be telling his own story.

He had been like her father, full of vitality and desire to do things, and with a good brain, as his school record proved. Then a man had cheated his father—business, he called it—his father had died bankrupt and he, Luke Mahan, had been kicked out into the world to fend for himself. . . . Those relatives and friends who had been so kindly while there was cash had been only too eager to be rid of him when he was cashless. Yes, he understood her father; such treatment had made him what he was, determined to treat the world in kind, determined to triumph with the world's ruthlessness.

But old Condon, it seemed, had not been quite like that.

"He came up here, settled here," Elizabeth Condon went on, "because it was beyond the reach of the things he hated. He said he would have one patch of sweetness in the world, anyhow. He won the Indians and made this estate. He said that good work, fair-dealing, kindness and contentment were all one needed in life. I'm certain he was right. We're all happy here, even the Indians. They trust us—me, we all work together."

"Even the Anyi trust you?" he asked.

"Yes," she smiled. "And they are not so bad as you seem to think. They hate the people of Losarinas—they were badly treated. They hated us at first—but fairness won them. And they are useful. They keep the stranger out."

"What about the Peru trail?"

"That's very long and difficult. We get some peons over it occasionally, and some go back, but not many: they are content here. My father turned back all white men in his life, and the legend still holds and they don't come. Besides, there's nothing for them to come for"—she hesitated—"or that is what they think."

He knew why she had hesitated. It was because of the gold. It was there, a secret well kept. She wouldn't tell it to him. But he knew of it, as those two men behind him knew of it. He'd find it for himself, and then—and then he'd see.

He said that often. He'd find the gold for himself, and then he'd see. It was only when he had said this for a week that he recognised that the words he thought were determination were only temporisation. He had made no attempt to find the gold. He'd ridden with Elizabeth. He'd been by her side as she administered rough law to the villagers and Indians. He'd watched

her treat the sick. He'd ridden with the old Mayordomo, talked over points of reorganisation, found interesting many matters in the management of the estate. The Mayordomo had been pleased, Elizabeth enthusiastic and intelligent, and himself—he'd surprised himself in the enjoyment he felt.

And then one day he woke up and called himself a fool. The girl beat him again by telling him of the gold. She said at breakfast: "You said that those new cultivators and the rest would cost a lot of money in Peru, Luke. . . ." She would call him Luke. . . . "And you think that it would drain me. . . . Well . . . well . . . I want you to come out with me this morning."

He almost glared at her. His heart was savage and heavy, he knew beyond doubt what she was meaning. She was going to lead him to the gold he had come to take from her.

She made certain they were not followed, then in that lonely part of her land, where the savage rock of the mountains thrust out into the living green of the grass, she took him along pinched valleys. She showed him a flaw in the strata scattered with great boulders, and one of these she pushed back. It covered a hole large enough for a man to crawl through, and into it they went, finding a hewn gallery inside, and torches. In due time they came to a big chamber, and as Mahan looked at the walls, he gasped.

"Ah, you see what it is, Luke," she laughed at him. "Gold! An old Indian working—Inca, perhaps. My father said it was immensely rich."

Rich—it was fabulous. Mahan's knife was pecking at the seam, picking out gold without effort.

"My father had the secret from an Indian cacique," the girl went on. "They helped each other, were sworn brothers. When the old chief died he passed the secret on to my father. He knew he would not abuse it."

"Abuse it?" cried Mahan thickly.

"Yes," nodded the girl. "The old cacique said that all the ills of the world came through gold; greed of gold had brought men who had broken his race. He kept the secret from his own tribesmen for that reason. Some might wander and talk to white men. The whites would come here, and all happiness would end. He just took what little he wanted for ornaments—we have some at the house—or to buy

things, and left the rest undisturbed. We have followed the same policy."

"But—it's worth millions," cried Mahan.

"To us?" she smiled. "Should we be better off with these valleys swarming with gold-seekers, with their greed, their drink, their lawlessness? What would become of our happiness then?"

Luke Mahan frowned. He thought of the bleak and ugly mining-districts he had been in. He had a vision of the smiling valleys of Piedron with their comeliness and herds ravaged by the savagery of greed. Yet this was gold, the gold he wanted, gold he meant to have. He stood before this slim stripling of a girl, and he could not answer.

He could not answer even himself for days. He told himself he was a fool. He listened to her talk about getting out enough gold to buy in Peru what they wanted for their improvements, apparently agreeing, and he cursed himself for a fool again. Why was he holding back? The thing he had come for was there. He had the power to take it, he *must* take it. . . . But he hesitated. He hesitated, wondering what had come to him, and one day he knew that he had hesitated too long.

A galloping peon came from the jungle to say that an armed party led by three señores had forced a way through and were advancing on the estancia. They meant danger, he thought; the Anyi had said they were terrible. They did mean danger, for Luke Mahan knew them—but three? He frowned. Then he understood. Nettkoven and Chavarra had brought the Magistrado of Varaly with them; of course they had done that. It was the law.

Elizabeth Condon was turning to him, a little frightened, but depending on him. He had to think quickly. He knew that Nettkoven and Chavarra were dangerous and must be handled carefully. They would not remember him. A down-river Indian, a jackal of his own, had told him that Nettkoven and Chavarra were on to something big. And the night he had heard them talk of Piedron, out of the many nights he had listened, they had not seen him. No, they would not know him—and he might fool them and win. He said evenly to the girl:

"They mean you no—hurt. Treat them as travellers. But above all, treat me as your Mayordomo." He stared at her. "I am a half-wit fellow who got in here—how you don't know—perhaps from Peru.

As I am a good worker and useful with the cattle, you have kept me employed—a long time. Do you agree?"

"Is there reason for this, Luke?" she asked.

"You must take my word for it there is. But if you do as I say you will not be in danger. Do you agree?"

"Of course," she smiled. "I trust you, Luke."

He walked away with that ringing in his ears, and a queer twist to his lips.

Nettkoven and Chavarra rode in guileless

and the Anyi, and ready to perform any business for hard cash.

The pair treated Elizabeth Condon with the courtesy of their semi-Iberian blood. They spoke flowery compliments, and they eyed her with contempt for the mere woman she was. They were pleased with themselves. They were on a soft thing. They even made much of the simple Mayordomo, for that would serve their purpose. They told Elizabeth that they were travelling on the business of the Government of the Republic of Losarinas, but waited until



"Will you sign there, please?" he said gruffly."

to the eye, but with eyes as hungry as wolves. They were met by Luke Mahan, but he was not the Luke Mahan he had been before he had spoken of his plan to the girl. He was a bulky young man with a half-vacant grin who greeted them cheerfully. He was clad in the extraordinarily baggy trousers of the guacho, and a loose shirt. There was no sign of guns on him. The pair grinned their satisfaction, for he was the one likely man to be seen. They themselves had seven armed scallywags behind them, as well as the Magistrado of Varaly, a fat, furtive little nobody, glad to be free of the jungle

next morning to state what that business was. Then they said, speaking for the Magistrado, who smiled in crafty acknowledgment, that a new law had ordered a survey of all the land and all estates within the Republic, and with the Señorita's permission they would ride the boundaries of her land for that purpose. They suggested that she should not incommode herself, but let her Mayordomo show them her holding. She was ready enough to do this, for these smiling, wolfish men filled her with anxiety, but something in Luke Mahan's face bade her say she would

accompany them herself. Chavarra, who was a rat of a man, snarled at that, but Nettkoven scowled at him. Nettkoven was the brains as well as the brawn of the party. He did not see the wisdom of making trouble—until it was necessary.

So they all rode the bounds of the estate to fulfil the law. The Magistrado of Varaly consulted and ticked off the details on the copy of the old State lease he had with him. They rode round the whole of the line of the wide-flung lands, and on returning, Nettkoven and Chavarra were scarcely able to hold in their glee. That afternoon they sat about the big table of the *sala*, the Magistrado of Varaly consulting the old papers and drawing up new ones. Elizabeth watched them, puzzled. She said in time:

"I suppose this has no bearing upon my tenure, Señores?"

"Not now," said Chavarra, and he sniggered. Nettkoven did not check him; he was in a great good-humour.

"What is it, friends?" said Luke Mahan in his simple way. "Some new trickery of law meaning new leases to be signed?"

Nettkoven looked at the heavy figure of the man sitting away off against the wall, his hands resting on the baggy thighs of his trousers. The man's weaponless state amused him. He laughed outright.

"You have said it, my friend—a new lease." He grinned at his sniggering partner and the leering Magistrado. "It is perhaps time to tell you, Señorita, since you will then not be able to say we went behind your back in an illegal way. The new Government of Losarinas is dissatisfied with the tenures and the surveys of their old land grants. They have enacted new laws. These new laws render all holdings void until they have been resurveyed, and that new survey signed and granted by the local officer of Justice." He bowed to the Magistrado. "The granting officer must ride the boundaries—as they did, or perhaps still do, in Brazil—and, having personally satisfied himself on the spot that the boundaries are such as stated in the lease, then and there, on the spot, grants the lease."

"I see," said Elizabeth Condon, a little bewildered. "And you, Señores, have been so kind as to ride over and make sure of my lease."

"We have been kind, but not as kind as that," said Nettkoven with an evil grin.

"Kindness—that begins at home," said Chavarra, and he burst out laughing. Eliza-

beth Condon drew back from the table angry and afraid.

"I do not understand you, Señores," she cried. "Is my lease in question?"

"Not in question," sniggered Chavarra, "for it is not there to question. The law, as you have heard, declared it void. . . ."

"Void," said Nettkoven, taking up the tale, "that means it was anybody's. That means it becomes the property of anyone intelligent enough and sharp enough to ride round its boundaries with the Magistrado. It desolates me to say it, Señorita, but having, by law, advanced and justified our claim, Piedron is now ours."

Elizabeth sprang back from the table. "You thieves!" she cried.

The dull voice of Mahan said: "And that is the lease you are drawing up now."

"That is so," laughed Nettkoven.

"It has to be signed, though," he said doggedly.

"It is ready now," sniggered the Magistrado, and he shoved the lease in duplicate towards Nettkoven.

Nettkoven picked up a pen: "We will soon put it beyond all doubt," he sneered, and bent towards the paper.

"Don't trouble, Nettkoven," said Mahan in a hard voice. "I'm looking after all that side of it."

Nettkoven looked up in time to see two pistols flash from ragged gaps in the baggy pantaloons.

"Kept 'em out of sight because I suspected you might be touchy at the sight of guns," said Mahan in his even, ruthless voice. "Reach for your own if you like—but my name's Luke Mahan!"

At the sound of that name both rogues shrank back and flung their hands above their heads. Luke Mahan's name was one of fear. The Magistrado, an up-river man, did not grasp this, but he knew the name. He shrilled:

"I thought I remembered you—pig-fool that I am. It was you I swore in as my Sheriff."

"That's so," said Mahan. "You didn't guess I was coming here—or that you were yourself. I thought it best to get ahead on a good thing. . . ."

"So that was your trick," said the Magistrado. "You wanted to be an officer of law to grant yourself this lease."

"I wanted to get here first—and I'm here first," said Mahan.

Chavarra's rat face thrust forward, working with rage.

"We soon settle you," he snarled. "You can be no Sheriff of Losarinas—a criminal like you."

"What crime have I ever committed, Chavarra?" said Mahan's grim voice. "Come now—name one criminal act against me?"

The fury in Chavarra's face showed that he would have vilified this man if he could, but he could not. He fenced: "Pah, you have dodged the law. You know how to make the most of the law. . . ."

"That's a national pastime in Losarinas," said Mahan. "I learnt the trick from your politicians who make the laws for that purpose."

The Magistrado barked up: "No matter, I can suppress you as Sheriff. I am the law. I can quash your acts as illegal, see. . . ."

Mahan turned on him grimly, but it was Nettken who spoke: "You fool, this is Mahan—Mahan of Cerrito, understand. . . ."

The Magistrado nearly fell off his chair in fright. Mahan's smile was cruel: "You questioned my integrity, Señor—?"

"Certainly not," quavered the man. "Your honesty is indisputable."

Elizabeth Condon, staring bewildered from one to the other, cried: "I do not understand it at all. What does it all mean?"

"It means, Señorita," said Nettken venomously, "that we came up here to take from you your estate, by means of the law—only to find that one more accomplished in the game has forestalled us."

"You say—he is going to rob me of Piedron?" gasped Elizabeth. "I don't believe it."

Nettken read her face, his fury found a way of satiating itself. He sneered: "The Señorita does not know the Señor Mahan's reputation, then. He is known as a man who seeks for what he wants—and takes it—"

"With the aid of the law," prompted Mahan grimly.

"With the aid of the law," sneered Nettken, "and those pistols he holds in his hands. He is the most terrible shot in South America. . . ."

"You should add, Nettken, that he has never shot unfairly."

Nettken said: "It may be so. . . . It is so. But that does not diminish your terror."

"As long as it impresses you, Nettken," said Mahan grimly. "And now, I think, we

have had all we need of your presence." He called. The old Mayordomo and two men entered. "You have disarmed the peons, Ignacio? Good! Do the same to these two men." He turned to Nettken and Chavarra. "You will go out to your men, and wait for my orders. You, Señor Magistrado, will draw up a new State lease for the Piedron land, and have it ready for signing when I come back. Do not fill in the names. I will see to that."

He went out after the Mayordomo and the two ruffians; Elizabeth stopped him at the veranda.

"Luke!" she gasped, "explain it to me—I don't believe those men."

"They spoke the truth," he said dully. "I overheard them talking back in Losarinas. I knew they meant to come up here to take your land—for the gold, you know. I got ahead of them. . . . I came to take it too. . . . That's my line of business."

She stared at him. "Luke," she said slowly, "you're not like that—underneath."

"Don't be mistaken," he said, almost fiercely. "I am. I learnt—early—that the world had no pity or use for those who aren't pitiless. My father was smashed because he was soft. I would have been, only I learnt the world's lesson. There's only one way to get on top in this world, that is to see what you want, find out how to take it—and take it. I've always taken what I wanted. I've become a specialist. I've been a most unpleasant person to argue with. . . . I have no sentiment. . . . You have heard the reputation they gave me. It's all true."

"I heard them say that you had not broken the law—that you had never shot unfairly. And I think that is true. I can see that in you."

"Does that put me in a better light?" he said fiercely. "You are forgetting I came here ahead of these to take your land. . . ."

"Yes, ahead of them—and you did not take it." She was suddenly smiling. She went and stood by the veranda rail. He stared at her grimly, then he shrugged and walked out to the waiting horsemen.

Nettken and Chavarra with their men sat their horses, surrounded by the armed horsemen of Piedron. Mahan stood in front of Nettken:

"I'm sending you through the bush, back where you came from, Nettken. You'll be safe from the Anyi because you'll

have an escort. . . . But any sort of return journey won't be safe, Nettkoven. You understand ? ”

Nettkoven looked at the pistols in Mahan's belt, and said sardonically : “ Fully ! I am not tempted to return.”

Mahan swung on his heel and went back to the *sala*. The Magistrado shrank at the sight of him, but pushed the papers towards him. “ Your lease is ready, Señor.”

Mahan examined it with eyes expert in Losarinas law. He wrote on the two copies. He straightened :

“ Miss Condon,” he called. She came to him. “ Will you sign there, please ? ” he said gruffly.

She looked at the lease, looked quickly at him, signed. He stood gazing out over the sweet lands of Piedron. Elizabeth was right about them. Here was happiness, after all. What more could a man want ? This greed of gold and power was all empty vanity. He saw her pass the papers back to the Magistrado. . . .

“ I'll be one witness,” he said, “ and Ignacio is coming in. . . . ”

“ Pardon me, Señor,” said the Magistrado in a cringing voice. “ You cannot be a witness to a lease drawn up in your own name. . . . ”

“ What ? ” shouted Mahan, and sprang to the table.

He looked down at the lease. Where he had written the name “ Elizabeth Condon,” as sole holder of the lease, the girl had added “ and Luke Mahan ”—the lease was to be granted to both jointly.

He stared at her. “ Elizabeth,” he cried. “ Elizabeth. . . . ”

“ Sign, Luke,” she said softly. Her eyes were bright and she was blushing. He stared for a full minute, called Ignacio to bring another witness—and signed.

Ten minutes later as they stood side by side at the veranda rail watching Nettkoven, Chavarra, the Magistrado and their ruffians heading back to Varaly—with the confirmed lease—Mahan gazed again over the sweet lands of Piedron. Yes, there lay happiness. He turned and looked into Elizabeth's eyes and saw the promise of that happiness confirmed.



YELLOW-HAMMER DAYS.

THANK God for yellow-hammer days,
The days when in green leaves they sing
And rise and take their shining ways,
Encrusted gold upon the wing.

What were the poor heart but to hold
Funeral forever in the house
Except that Memory should fold
The company of these bright boughs.

Should open every window wide,
And fling ajar each bitter door,
So flocks of Golden-breasts abide
With sweet cries filling roof and floor.

A. NEWBERRY CHOYCE.



THE SENTIMENTAL SEX.

HE: Topping moon, what!
SHE (scornfully: Sentimentalist!

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

COMPETITIVE CONSOLATION.

By Howard May.

ACCORDING to the latest medical bulletin, Enid is progressing as well as can be expected in the circumstances, and will probably be quite out of danger by the week-end.

Enid, my youngest child, I may say is ten, and is still alive in spite of the universal prevalence of the unreasoning mania for doing good by stealth. Both she and I, as a matter of fact, are weary of well-doing—other folks' well-doing.

Need I say it, my wife began it, and I—well, I shall have the doubtful satisfaction of ending it—when the doctor's bill arrives. Listen!

"Help me, daddy." That was Enid.

"Certainly," I had assented, hoping that it would not be algebra again. "Let me see your problem!"

"Tisn't 'rithmetic, daddy. It's a cross-word."

Disappointed as a parent, but pleasurably surprised as a human being, I helped. The puzzle, I found, was almost finished, only a few blanks remaining to be elucidated.

"Have you done all this yourself?" I queried,

in order to gain time to survey the position.

"Yes, daddy, all by myself."

Pause.

"Mums helped just a teeny-weeny little bit."

Another interval for further strivings of conscience.

"And Grace."

Grace is my elder, grown-up daughter. At least she is seventeen.

"So there were just the three of you, eh?"

"Yes, daddy . . . except for Mr. Wulmer and Mr. Hollings."

Grace's admirers.

"Sure that was all?"

"Quite, daddy dear. Only Jack . . ."

Well, of course, there would be Jack. He is my grown-up, patronising son.

"And there was nobody else?"

"Nobody, daddy. Aunt Minnie and Uncle Alfred . . ." Then seeing that my enthusiasm was waning, and my aid likely to be withdrawn, "But they could only do the easy ones, daddy. They left all the hardestest. But you can do them, can't you, daddy?"

Well! Well!

I gave my attention to the puzzle. Have you ever seen what a crossword puzzle looks like when seven adults and one child have expressed their individual and collective personalities upon it? Well . . . don't! And it goes without saying that it was all wrong. For instance, number forty-seven across, clue "Docile domestic animal." I'm ready to wager that it was Jack who solved that as "Daddy." Braving Enid's impatience, I had to begin the whole thing over again, as, judging from the lamentable number of second thoughts already in evidence, had done at least four of my predecessors. In very due course—Enid by this time, I fear, was beginning to think that her daddy was going to prove as big a sell as her previous "helpers"—I attacked the blanks.

health-giving possibilities and palatableness of brimstone and treacle, or the impropriety of a diet consisting mainly if not solely of chocolate creams, was being rudely challenged.

In the meantime Enid was getting impatient.

"You can do it, can't you, daddy?"

Bless the child!

"Yes. Yes, dear. Of course."

Something must be done. I positively couldn't betray the unquestioning faith of a daughter in her daddy, and thus risk shattering the happiness of a home. I must act. Casting caution to the winds, I soon discovered that my knowledge of South American centipedes was encyclopædic, that bicarboniferous bacillate and such malodorous abominations were . . . child's-play. As to the discoverer of Xeroell-what'sit



THE MOOD OF THE MOMENT.

SHE: Oh, Henry! How grand the sea is! How awe-inspiring! I simply love to hear the roar of the waves.

How—

HE: So do I, Jane. So please keep quiet for a few minutes.

Fifty-seven down, seven letters, clue "Extinct species of carnivorous Uruguayan centipede." H'm! Not much in my line. Fifteen across, "Archæological genera of bicarboniferous bacillate." H'm! H'm! Never was clever at "stinks." Twenty-nine across, "Discoverer of Xerocollyrium." H'm! H'm! H'm!

I stole a glance at Enid. Her unquestioning trust and confident expectation were touching. The child was relying on me—her daddy. Could I shatter all her hopes by telling her that I had not even the slightest acquaintance with any kind of archæological genera, or bicarboniferous bacillate, nor yet Xeroell-asisedbefore? Besides, the effect of such an admission upon my parental authority would be disastrous. Already my absolute infallibility in such matters as the

—well, I felt fairly confident that not even a modern schoolgirl could contradict my statement regarding him, poor fellow. At this rate the blanks were soon filled in. And my reward . . .

"Oh, daddy, you are clever! And now I shall win a prize, shan't I?"

A prize! For a crossword! In 1927! Good heavens! Here was an unlooked-for complication. Very awkward! You will understand that it is one thing to, say, exercise parental discretion in the matter of carnivorous crawlers, carboniferous bacillate, or even Xer-youknow, in the interests of the child's own happiness. But it is vastly different when such a necessary process ruins her chances of winning a prize. I must have time to think again.

"What will you do if you win the first prize?"

"Don't want first prize, daddy."

That was modest, anyway.

"Which then?"—hopefully.

"I'd like a consolation prize, daddy."

I began to see a way out. "Why, dear?"

Long before the fateful day of the distribution of prizes came round, Enid had ceased talking about her puzzle. Therefore, when the momentous day did actually arrive, I chuckled excessively to myself. My little surprise would taste all the sweeter.

But why on earth didn't the postman arrive?



THE POINT OF VIEW.

MURIEL: Nine out of every ten girls seem to have a mission in life.

JOAN: Yes, and the tenth would marry, too, if she got the chance.

"Chocs, daddy. Then I could give you all some."

Bless the infant! After all we had done to spoil her crossword, she was willing to share the prize. Well . . . and why shouldn't she? What was the closing date? And the date for distributing the prizes? Bless the child! And why shouldn't she?

* * * * *

Surely no unchancy fate would interfere with the Postmaster-General in the execution of his duties on this special morning. Ah, but there was his step, and his knock. Calling to Enid, I strolled with leisurely haste to the door.

"Parcel for Miss E. Roberts," he commented, rather sourly, I thought.

Good! The P.M.G. and unchancy fate were both exonerated. But the postman didn't go.

Instead, he handed over another parcel, and another, and another, and another, until I stood, breathing hard and trying to keep my head above a barricade of packages all addressed to Enid. Something had gone wrong.

Enid, of course, insisted on seeing them all opened. Thank heaven, at any rate, she did not recognise the badly disguised writing of her Mother, Jack, Grace, and the rest of us. Each parcel contained a slip of pasteboard bearing the device, "Consolation Prize," and also a goodly sized box of chocolates. Eight boxes of chocolate—one child. I trembled.

Well! Well! As I said before, the doctor

To get a slinky shape again
You'll have to work, and as you train—
Your new allegiance recanting—
Hold to the creed of Dr. Banting!
Leslie M. Oyler.



THE GIDDY RESORT.

A FAMILY council was being held with the object of deciding where the annual summer holiday should be spent. Father, who had been reading a guide-book, said: "I see that at Winkle Bay there is a circulating library, and an Assembly Room where select concerts are given twice a



NO DAMAGE TO BE DONE.

Now then, young Alfie, you stop pulling them trees about!"

says the worst is nearly over, and I had the doubtful satisfaction, at least, that it was my box that she began to consume first.



TO TIM, A COCKER SPANIEL.

Your figure, once so svelte and trim
(The kind that Fashion artists limn),
Alas! is daily growing fatter
From over-fondness for your platter.

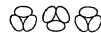
This state of things won't do, old son.
You, once so useful with the gun,
Of late your duty have been shirking;
You've waddled home instead of working.

Although devoted to the chase,
You a new mistress now embrace,
And so I feel compelled to mention
You're paying Cook too much attention.

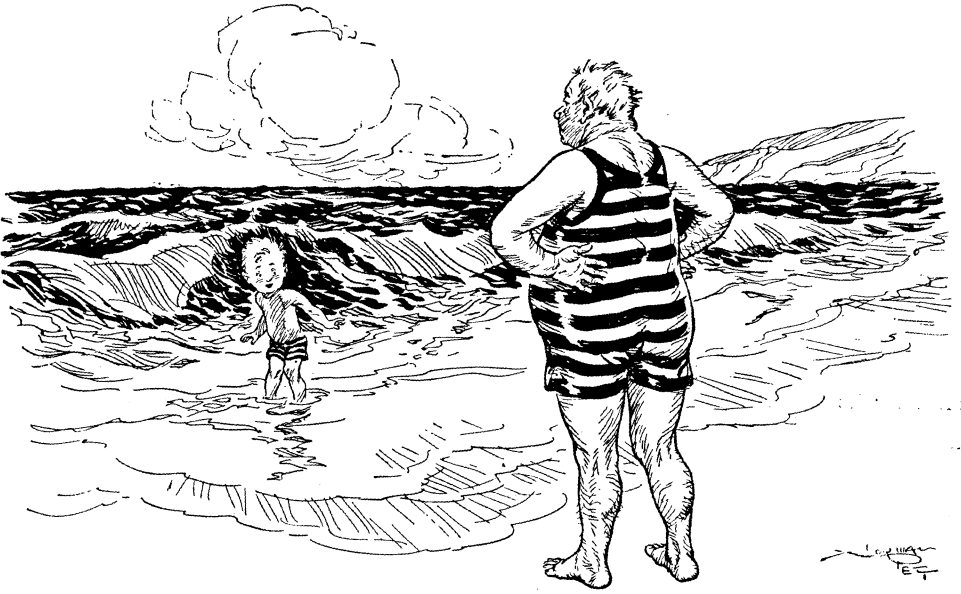
week. There are also bathing-machines on the beach."

"How delightful!" cried all the girls in chorus. "Do let us go there, papa!" So they went and enjoyed themselves very much.

You don't believe this? Well, I'm sorry, but the conversation recorded above took place in 1876, which shows how easily pleased grandma was in the matter of holiday joys, and why she has kept her schoolgirl complexion.



"Too bad!" exclaimed the professor. "One of my pupils to whom I've given two courses of instruction in the cultivation of the memory, has forgotten to pay me, and the worst of it is, I can't remember his name."



PLENTY OF ROOM.

LITTLE PETER: Come in too, Uncle, there's room for you as well!



MUCH IN A MEAL.

MISTRESS: We shall be having visitors to dinner to-morrow, cook."

Cook: What sort of dinner will you want, so that they'll come again, or so that they'll stay away! "

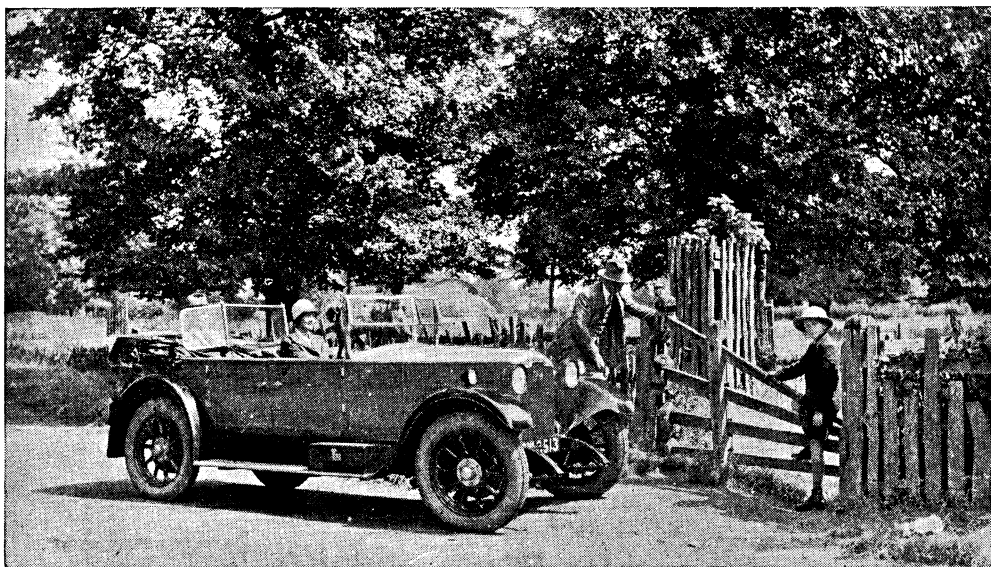
FAMILY MOTORING AT HOLIDAY TIME.

BY CECIL B. WATERLOW.

TRAVELLING by train one wishes and hopes to have a compartment to oneself; especially if "oneself" implies not a solitary figure, but a family or party of friends. At holiday times this hope is usually impossible of fulfilment, even if you pay for first-class tickets; but on our splendid roads the conditions of travel are very different. Every private car on our crowded highways and by-ways, no matter how small and cheap, is really a reserved compartment for its owner and family or friends; a

details of cost and care. They want to know how much a private travelling compartment—a modest family car, that is to say—will cost in money, time and trouble; and, as an enthusiast, I should like to tell the tale as briefly and baldly as possible. Here are the broad facts.

The category of reliable small family cars ranges to-day from the famous Austin 7 at £145 up to many fine propositions in the neighbourhood of £250—we are considering for the moment only the less expensive ones. Let us say, then,



WITH A ROVER AT CHARLECOTE, WARWICKSHIRE.

The curious "tipping stile" is said to have been in position since Shakespeare's day.

compartment which starts and stops just when you wish—part of a phantom train that does not have to be *caught*; a compartment from which you see not only the whole lovely, fleeting summer landscape, but other happy compartments as well. Could the dreams of any child, looking forward with rapture fifty years ago to the excitement of a railway journey, have foreseen our vast array of reserved compartments, all speeding at will, wherever the spirit of their occupants moves them?

The age in which we live makes such immense demands upon our capacity for appreciation and admiration that, limited as we are, we are forced to treat as commonplace many things that are really miraculous. Modern man and woman, Martha-like, turn from vague visions of wonder and vistas of endless possibility, to

that the capital sum required to buy a car is £200, the interest on which at 5 per cent. is £10 per annum. To get only an approximate idea, tax and insurance may both be written at the same figure, totalling £20—for the Austin 7 just mentioned these charges are much lower, amounting to about £14. Annual running expenses, of course, depend largely on mileage, but £30 is a fair average for a family that uses a car for recreation and holidays only. Depreciation is a somewhat intangible item, depending on whether the car is kept for the whole of its useful life or given in exchange for a new one at the end of a year. For the purpose of completing these round figures we may put it at 20 per cent. per annum of the car's value, i.e. £40 for a car costing £200. The total annual cost of a private travelling compartment such as

TWO MEN

1

A man in his thirtieth year started saving £33 0s. 10d. per year, and put his money into first-class investments. He died, and left **£482**

2

Another man at the same age started saving £33 0s. 10d. per year. He bought an Endowment Policy from the Prudential Assurance Company. He died; his dependants received over **£1,000**. If he had lived to the age of sixty he would have received a cheque for **£1,660**

This example is based upon actual present-day bonus conditions.

That is the way to *save and insure* at the same time.

■ ■ ■ ■ ■

A note to The Prudential Assurance Company, Holborn Bars, London, E.C.1, stating your age, will bring you full and interesting particulars of this two-fold policy

Mention this Magazine

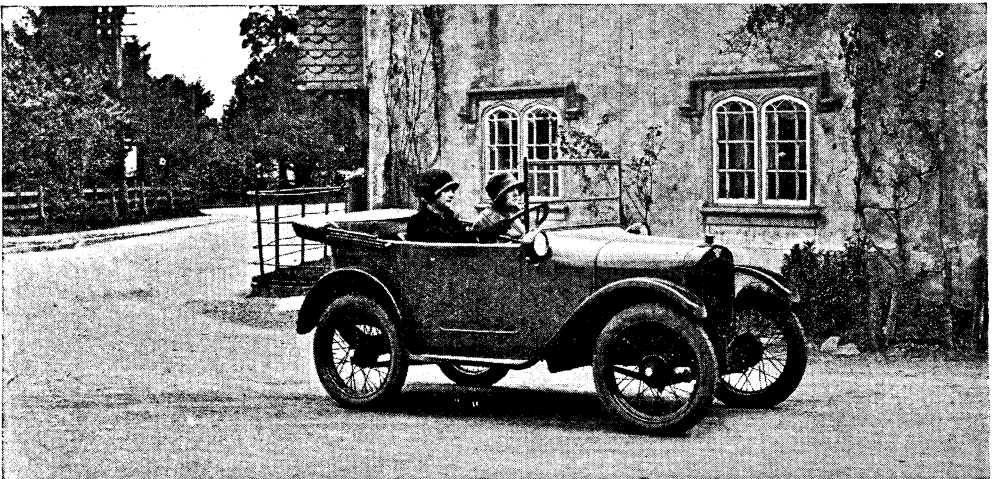
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we are discussing thus comes out in very round figures at £100. But from this should be deducted the expense of all alternative railway travelling, also the price that would be paid for other recreations, were a car not used. It is by no means fantastic to say that car ownership may prove a paying proposition to any family in more senses than one.

There is another thing that paterfamilias and other busy men want to know about running a car. How much time is it going to take up when not on the road? An estimate has been published by a certain technical journal with a big reputation in the automobile world, and the average figure arrived at is 11 hours in the year! Even this low figure, moreover, is constantly being attacked by motor manufacturers, for one of the great cries of the age is "Give us more Time!" Improvements in automatic lubrication, better tyres, scratch-proof paint and

There is thus a cash balance of over £2 in favour of the car for three people—it would be greater with four—and this ample margin more than meets garaging and other incidental expenses. Moreover, there is another important balance in favour of the car, a credit at the Bank of Life! It is no wonder then that last year I did not get into a train at all until December arrived.

Everyone who thinks of becoming the owner-driver of a modest family car wants first of all to get a grasp of such practical considerations as have just been set down; and there is another possible, lurking cause for hesitation: is he or she capable, without special training and expert knowledge, of managing and driving safely this complicated and wonderful machine? If anyone has any doubts on this point let him just take a good walk along any main road on a Saturday or Sunday and keep his eyes open—fortunately he can do so, as there is little dust



A "BABY" AUSTIN.

varnish, and a constant increase in the mechanical reliability of all parts, are continually cutting down the time that the owner-driver has to spend on the maintenance of his machine.

It may be helpful here to take an example, for actual experience is always convincing. My car, a small 4-seater costing £220 originally, consumed petrol last year at the rate of 41·2 miles to the gallon. My home is about 70 miles from London and the third-class return fare is 17s. 10d. Therefore, the cost of a trip to London and back by rail for three people, excluding cabs, tubes, porters, 'buses, etc., is £2 13s. 6d., whereas the cost in round figures by car is:

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Petrol, say 3½ gallons, allowing for traffic	4	6
Lubricating oil	1	0
Depreciation and interest on capital for 1 day	5	0
Total	10	6

nowadays! What he sees will give the lie at once to any timid notion about not being capable of managing a car.

A certain foreigner came recently to England for the first time in her life, and was particularly astonished by three things she saw: the general excellence everywhere of our roads, the great number of motor cycles as well as cars upon them, and the fact that women drive as a matter of course and in numbers nearly equal to men; for, in her own land, the woman's place is still considered to be in the kitchen or at the wash-tub, rather than at the wheel of a car.

Our country is small and crowded by comparison with others, so that it is difficult for people who know little of it to escape the crowds when they wish to. The finest way to know your land, to discover its great spaces—for there are still lonely, open spaces in England—is to explore it by road. There is tranquillity to be found by anyone prepared to leave the beaten tracks, thronged as they are with summer tourists.

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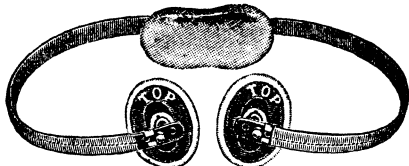
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By **MIMOSA**

A complexion that appears clear, fresh, and natural is as necessary to the smart woman as a modish gown. More attention should be given to keeping the skin "fit" than to the details of dress. The face, constantly exposed to wind, dust, fatigue, and strain, requires regular and watchful care. One great cause of complexion troubles is the frequent use of greasy, inactive preparations which clog the pores and prevent the natural throwing off of waste matter. My repeated advice is to avoid made-up cosmetics and to use only pure ingredients. The various aids to beauty which I recommend are simple, and, if not already at hand, can be procured from any reliable chemist. If he has not what you require he can easily obtain it for you from his wholesaler. Only let me advise you to insist on having the original ingredients and not to accept some made-up preparation instead.

"Golden Locks."—Rub a little salt water into the roots of your hair to brighten it. The best shampoo you can use is plain Stallax. Get a packet and use a teaspoonful to a cup of hot water for each shampoo. It makes the hair soft and fluffy, and imparts some of its own delightful fresh fragrance. Do not shampoo with soap.

"Face Bleach."—The skin is constantly being renewed by nature and unless the deadened outer coating is thrown off naturally the complexion becomes old and muddy. Instead of face bleach use pure Mergolized Wax for a few nights as you would a face cream. It will absorb all the dead tissue and you will have a natural complexion that will bear the closest scrutiny. Usually one ounce is sufficient.

"Run Down."—Functional slackness—when the organs are even the merest trifle "out of balance"—is the root cause of a host of ills—nervous and digestive. There is no need to take drastic measures. Nine times out of ten you simply need a gentle tonic which will stimulate your weakened power of nutrition. Iron-Ox tiny tonic tablets is the ideal remedy.

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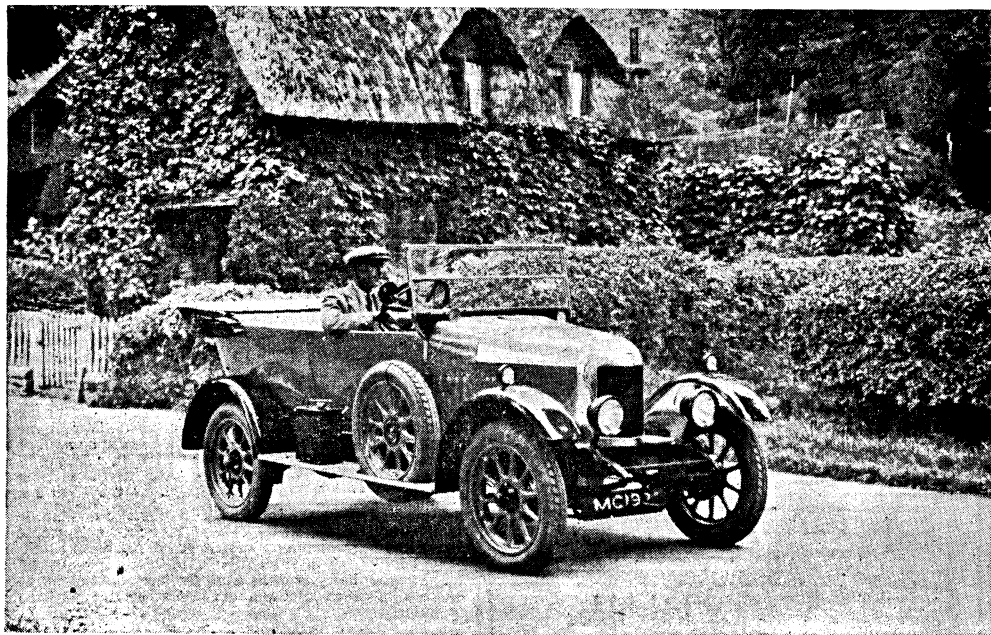
There is nothing quite so serene as the peace in which the depths of rural England are still steeped, no beauty more soothing and delicious than that of our woods and fields at their best. To realise this fully it is necessary to have travelled far over the world, and to have seen most of the phases of earth's splendour, the vast magnificence of eternal snows and the burning glory of tropical lands.

With the whole country to choose from, selection is difficult, and it would be invidious to declare that any particular part is the most beautiful of all. Therefore, in describing briefly from the motoring point of view the district around three historic towns, I shall only be taking a sample—one of many that might be chosen. The three historic cities are Winchester,

kept gardens, called Nether Wallop, Middle Wallop and Over Wallop: such names are irresistible, and the hamlets that bear them are utterly removed from the swirl of modern everyday life.

Onwards towards Salisbury this road comes up and out on to the great spaces of the Plain. It runs as a dark ribbon amidst pale green, with here and there an outcrop of white chalk, often visible for miles ahead. Here your car is like a bird on the wing, swooping down finally towards the most gracious Cathedral spire in England.

You see the spire of Salisbury Cathedral as Turner painted it from Pepperbox Hill on the neighbouring Romsey road, rising from the mists of the Avon Valley; and it continues to point to the sky, above gently curving Wiltshire



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Southampton and Salisbury, fairly close together in the South. Between the last two lies a region that is unique, our great National Park, the New Forest, whilst the magnificent spaces of Salisbury Plain are crossed by the road joining the two Cathedral Cities.

Those who work out their motor trips in advance with maps may notice that the direct road from Winchester to Salisbury is marked as a secondary route, unless the map happens to be very new. Actually it has been modernised and is one of the finest, smoothest highways in the South of England, free as yet from the pounding of heavy commercial traffic. It dips into the rich valley of the Test at Stockbridge and, a little farther on, into the green oasis of the Wallop Brook. Here, just off the main road, are three tiny villages, extremely picturesque, with thatched cottages and gay, well-

downs, long after you have left the dear old city of Salisbury in its hollow.

The road from Stockbridge over the Plain is very spacious, but that which leads on to Dorchester is even more so. About half-way from Sarum you come to Handley Cross, a bleak cross-roads, appropriate as the scene of some mediæval gibbet. But in these changed times an A.A. telephone-box and a neat, businesslike and helpful scout are found there instead. Handley Cross is mentioned here, because, by turning to the right as you come from Salisbury, you get to Cranbourne Chase and Tollard Royal, the scene of the early chapters of Thomas Hardy's great novel, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Almost the last tragic episode of this book takes place at Stonehenge, also not far from here—some twelve miles north of Salisbury, near Amesbury. But those who expect to recall at Stonehenge

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the grim loneliness of ancient days will be disappointed, for a large aerodrome, a product of the war, now stands near by.

At Dorchester the curious can see the very house in which the great Wessex novelist lives; but it is perhaps preferable to see Wessex itself, for it now lies spread before the motorist, smiling, entirely at his disposal. The run from Dorchester through Wimborne and Ringwood to Southampton takes you right through the New Forest, through its deep green beech groves and over dark heaths where wild ponies stray. But before entering this region you pass Puddletown, Tolpuddle and Bere Regis. The names of these Wessex villages tell the tale of what they are; ancient, peaceful and very sweet. Quite close in the south also is the Dorset coast, with its famous resorts such as Weymouth, and unique beauty spots such as Lulworth Cove, whilst Bournemouth and Christchurch lie just over the Hampshire border.

Along this road through the Forest you will meet much motor traffic of all kinds, varying from boys and maidens in brightly coloured French berets dashing along on motor bicycles, to those modern, pneumatic-tyred leviathans of the road, charabancs carrying thirty or forty people. It is extremely amusing to sit by the wayside for awhile and watch the world on wheels roll by, to sit and picnic if so minded, for the New Forest is our most popular picnicking ground. But if you want seclusion and the utmost beauty that the Forest can show, turn aside to the right just before you come to Stoney Cross, follow a rather rough track through two gates, which will probably be opened for you by local children anxious for pennies, and enter Mark Ash Wood, the very heart of the Forest, where the grandest trees in all England grow, piling mountains of green foliage hundreds of feet towards the clouds, turning to an orgy of burnished copper and gold as autumn draws on.

Romsey with its Norman Abbey, the finest specimen in the country it is said, lies between the Forest and Winchester; and, of course, the great Cathedral of the Hampshire capital needs no special praise. The Castle at Winchester also, with relics of King Arthur, is there to be seen.

In one day, in one long, summer afternoon even, you can visit all the places and pass through all the scenes that have just been briefly sketched; and then you can think of what lies farther afield—the rich, incomparable Weald of Sussex and Kent to the east and glorious Devon in the west.

We are only just at the beginning of a bright,

new prospect, of an age in which our beautiful land will really be at your disposal, no matter what politics and social systems may decide about it; an age in which every family will have its private travelling compartment for the purpose of truly living in the land. By these inadequate remarks I hope to give a glimpse of what any family can have to-day, which is able to afford an annual outlay of about £100. This figure will not increase; on the contrary, it will decline, as it has done in America, where every family, almost, already has at least one car. The face of life is changing and will change, vastly for the better, I think; although many still profess the belief that all progress is a delusion. If you ask what is the chief meaning, what the goal, of the change brought about by the spread of family motoring, the answer is contained in one blessed word, contentment.

It is not possible to express clearly in words what motoring does and means for those of us who have been able to take it up, even though humbly and at small expense—but watch the faces of the boys and girls who go by on their motor bikes! To realise what it has done for me I have to make a serious, unwonted mental effort, casting my mind back to the days before it came into my life. I was young then, but am younger now, because I stand near the beginning of a bright new prospect, and one cannot age in such a position. To describe the prospect truly is probably beyond the power of language; but let us try to climb just a little way “Up the Moonstairs.”

Not only this dear old England of ours, but the whole world also, will soon be at your disposal. You, if you will pardon the impertinence, are just an average citizen. Wherever you are you will be able to satisfy a longing that is deeply ingrained in every normal child: you will be able to find out and enjoy what is on the other side of the hill. The average citizen will no longer have reason to resent being only “average”; and think what the coming of general contentment into our world may mean. People will be contented, not simply because they are able to have private travelling compartments at holiday times: that is just an amusing detail in the spread of family motoring—one burden lifted from the shoulders of a harassed paterfamilias. They will be contented because their lives will be better spent, more completely fulfilled. There will be much more in life. Therefore, it will be longer, regardless of numbers of years; for Leonardo da Vinci, four centuries ago, was truthful and penetrating when he wrote that “Life well spent is long.”

The foregoing article forms the introduction to a short series designed to be of service to “Windsor” readers who find that there are many points still to be ascertained and some difficulties to be overcome before they can become enthusiastic motorists. Advice will gladly be given to correspondents who may like to send any letter of enquiry to The Editor, “The Windsor Magazine,” Warwick House, Salisbury Square, London, E.C.4. The next article will appear in the ensuing number.

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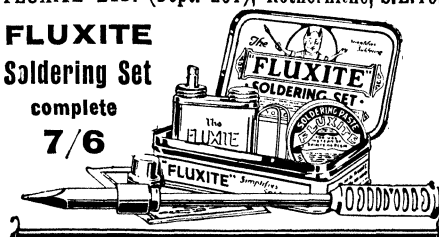
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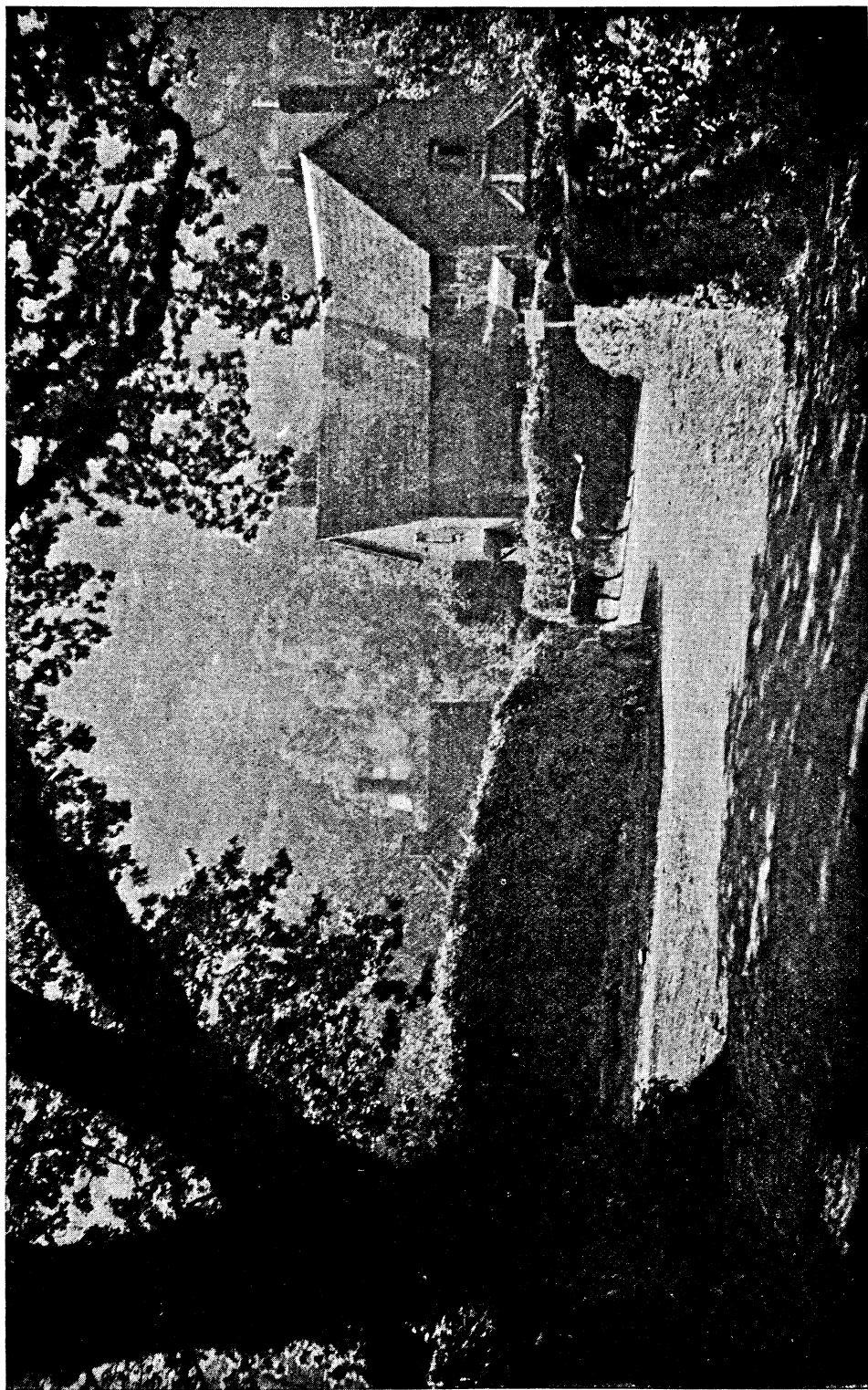
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EVENTIDE.

From a Photographic Study by Clement E. Kille.



"Mr. Scrope fumbled for his spectacles and glared up as if to see what sort of bad bargain he had made. 'Bless my soul, what a pair of children you are!' the old man grumbled. 'I pictured you a round dozen years older.'"

PANDORA'S BOX

◦ By STEPHEN McKENNA ◦

◦ ILLUSTRATED BY LINDSAY CABLE ◦ ◦

WHEN the news came to Antibes that Henry Morgan, the Paris manager of Scopes, had been found dead in his bed, Paula Daventry hid the *Continental Daily Mail* for fear of exciting her husband with hopes which would almost certainly be disappointed. The Paris office, even without the contrast of Leeds, where he had served his apprenticeship, and Manchester, which he now ruled, was Arthur's dream; and the dream might reasonably have been expected to come true in another five years' time. At present, however, old Mr. Scrope would say that he was too young.

Perhaps, too, he would ordain that Arthur must not be given harder work and greater responsibility until his health was more dependable. When the directors came to review Morgan's possible successors, the

general manager would inevitably repeat the warning which he had issued when the Berlin branch became vacant: "Daventry? The ideal man if we could trust him not to break down, but he has to go south every winter. . . ." And then Arthur, who could not resign himself to being even intermittently an invalid, would fume and fret till his temperature raced up and the doctor from Cannes grumbled that their weeks at the Villa Montcalm had done him less than no good. Paula thrust the *Daily Mail* from sight, hoping vaguely that the death of Henry Morgan and the promotion of his successor would be ancient and inoffensive history by the time that Arthur's benevolent uncle came back to the villa which he had lent them and they in turn went sadly north to the lingering remains of the English winter.

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It would be foolish, Paula reflected, to ruin their last ten days in this paradise of sunshine and spring flowers by repeating dismally how much they both hated the black industrial north and how cheerfully they would sell their souls for a transfer to Paris or even Milan. If they were too young for promotion, they were at least young enough to enjoy themselves; and, if Arthur had to be packed abroad every winter, they were blessed in having kindly relations to provide them with house, garden, servants, food and wine. For a fortnight they had been enjoying a second honeymoon. After a late breakfast they would drift into Cannes to spend happy hours sunning themselves on the Croisette or staring at the shops in the Rue d'Antibes. At noon they repaired to the Galeries Fleuries and sat, sipping their cocktails, at a little table between the bands until it was time to return home for luncheon. In the afternoon they played lawn-tennis; in the evening they danced or gambled mildly at the Casino. Already the shadow of coming departure was falling on them as they reckoned wistfully that they had been away for so many days and that only so many days more remained. One did not want to deepen the shadow by reiterating that, if only they could succeed the Morgans, they would be exchanging the spring of the Riviera for the spring of Paris.

"Let's be thankful for what we have," Paula counselled herself. "Of course, if by some miracle . . ."

She interrupted her musing at a cry from Arthur, whom she had left breakfasting on his verandah in sunshine that was hot at nine o'clock in the morning and scented with a creamy blend of pine-trees and mimosa.

"Read that!" he called out indignantly, fluttering a letter before her. "Old Scrope, of all people, wants to come *here*! He's had to give up his room at Cannes and he can't get another one. Will we put him up for a week? He's booked his place on the 'Blue' for Saturday . . ."

II.

PAULA felt her heart thumping. As a friend of the Peter Daventrys, old Mr. Scrope had stayed at the Villa Montcalm in the past. It was natural enough that he should propose himself again, natural that he should billet himself on one of his managers and natural that his request—with the reason which he gave for it—should mean precisely what he said, no less and no more. At the same time, it was impossible to dissociate it from the

news in that morning's *Daily Mail*. A man like Mr. Scrope was not usually hunted out of one hotel or refused accommodation at another. Far more likely it seemed that he was coming on business: not, of course, to offer them anything (Paula felt that, if only they kept their heads, they would have no reason to be disappointed afterwards), but to remind himself what sort of man Arthur was, to see what sort of health he was in. . . .

Paula read with pursed lips and narrowed eyes. The old gentleman wrote with an engaging mixture of courtesy and firmness: though he understood that they were themselves the guests of his old friends Peter and Margaret Daventry, he must not impose on their good nature and he would therefore be obliged if he might contribute to the expenses of the villa. He was more than anxious to meet Mrs. Arthur Daventry ("It *doesn't* mean anything!" Paula whispered, "but the Paris manager has to entertain tremendously and they must be sure that I don't squint or eat peas with a knife . . ."), but he could promise them that he would not be a nuisance. Indeed, if they could supply him with bed, breakfast and dinner, he would leave them in peace all day.

"Of course we must say we shall be delighted," Paula answered.

He was proposing himself, she observed, for a date when they had been asked to dine at the Ambassadeurs; and she had to make Arthur see that the engagement must be cancelled without leading him to build extravagant hopes on Mr. Scrope's visit.

"It's a bit cool," her easily ruffled husband was still grumbling. "We don't want him. If I didn't happen to be a subordinate in his precious business, he wouldn't dare to ask himself like this . . . I propose to say that we're very sorry, but the villa's full . . ."

Paula shook her head with a determination that left no room for argument.

"You can't do that! He may want to talk business; and it would be a black mark against you if you wouldn't take the trouble to meet him."

"There can't be any business to discuss when we've both been away from our offices for several weeks."

"One never knows." Paula decided that her husband must be discreetly forearmed. "I don't suggest that there's anything in it, but he might conceivably want to sound you about a transfer. I don't suppose you've seen that Mr. Morgan died two days ago . . ."

Arthur Daventry sprang to his feet and looked about him for a newspaper.

"Henry Morgan?" he asked.

"Yes. Of course we shan't be offered Paris; but, if there's general post, we might

plexion. We must do him well, too. Tell Jeanne that fortunes hang on her every omelette. I must talk to Wilson about the cellar. I hope to goodness uncle Peter left some decent champagne. Wilson!" he shouted in the direction of the pantry. "We shall want some cigars, too," he continued in rising excitement. "D'you think he'll bring his own car, or shall I try to hire one? We must keep him amused . . ."

Paula shook her head and conducted her husband back to the table on which his neglected coffee was cooling.

"My dear, that's absolutely the wrong line," she told him. "We aren't million-



"Henry Morgan?" he asked.
 "Yes. Of course we shan't be offered Paris; but, if there's general post, we might get Vienna. We must impress Mr. Scrope favourably."

get Vienna. We must impress Mr. Scrope favourably."

Arthur looked with shining eyes at his flushed and pretty young wife. Then he smiled and caught her to him.

"You'll have to vamp our worthy chairman," he informed her. "Your smartest clothes and your most schoolgirlish com-

aires, so we mustn't try to live as such. If you gave him champagne more than once, he'd say we were letting ourselves go in uncle Peter's absence; he'd think we were extravagant, greedy, not to be trusted with the firm's money for entertaining. I'll look my best, because I must do credit to you and the business, but we must be a steady,

quiet, young couple, with simple tastes and no vices." Her eyes clouded for a moment at the vision of the delights which she was forswearing: there would, for a week, be no parties at the Arménonville, no meeting by the bands in the Galéries gardens, no flutters at the Casino. For a week this second honeymoon would be suspended. The sacrifice, however, was worth while if the Paris office were the prize. "I'm not sure I oughtn't to give up cigarettes while he's here . . .," she volunteered, with a sudden rush of virtue to her conscience.

"I'm quite sure you ought to give up cocktails," Arthur put in. "That's just the sort of thing that would shock old Scrope. He's pre-Victorian and in his dotage, I believe, into the bargain."

Paula's jaw fell.

"Arthur my dear, there are limits to my devotion! If I don't have just one cocktail before dinner . . ."

"Well, you must tell Wilson to bring it you in your room. Oh, good morning, Wilson. I wanted to discuss the state of the cellar. Mr. Scrope, the chairman of my company, will be staying here for a week . . ."

III.

THE unknown guest, like every stranger, commonly proves to be simultaneously better and worse than he is expected; and old Mr. Scrope, like other guests, gave no kind of trouble where it had been anticipated and, in compensation, threatened every kind of trouble where it had not. Arriving in his own car, which was garaged in Cannes, with a chauffeur who valeted him, he brought only reasonable luggage and carried a pile of books—chosen by himself—under one arm and a wallet of cigars under the other. His first words, spoken to Wilson, were concerned with questions about the hours of meals; and the butler's deferentially repeated "If that will suit you, sir?" was cut short when the old man announced briefly that he ate and drank and went to bed and got up again like other people and that he would fall in with the rules and times of the house.

"So far, so good," Paula whispered to her reflection, as she surveyed the effect of what Arthur called her smartest clothes and most schoolgirlish complexion.

The old man's next words, when Arthur and she hurried forward to welcome their guest, were less reassuring.

"Mrs. Daventry?" grunted Mr. Scrope.

"And Daventry? First time we've met, I think, Daventry, though your uncle Peter's an old friend. Come to think of it, I found you a place in the business to oblige him." Until this moment Arthur had hugged the belief that he owed his position more to an unusually brilliant career at school and college than to nepotism at one remove. The news deflated his confidence in himself; and he was conscious of looking sheepish as Mr. Scrope fumbled for his spectacles and glared up as if to see what sort of bad bargain he had made. "Bless my soul, what a pair of children you are!" the old man grumbled "I pictured you a round dozen years older."

"Too young at thirty!" Paula told herself. Aloud she said: "Your letter was a delightful surprise, Mr. Scrope. Now, luncheon will be ready in ten minutes. Would you like something first? Vermouth or a cocktail?"

Shaggy, shabby and red-faced, the old man held his steel spectacles in place with a tobacco-stained thumb and forefinger while he regarded her shrewdly from under his bushy eye-brows.

"Having one yourself?" he asked, as though the answer would "place" her once and for all.

"Not if you won't think us unsociable," answered Paula in a formula that seemed neatly to combine native asceticism with diplomatic toleration.

Mr. Scrope seemed faintly disappointed.

"Well, perhaps you're better without it at your age," he mumbled; and Paula felt that she had earned one good mark from the pre-Victorian. "For once in a way I don't mind drinking alone. If you haven't killed yourself by the time you're eighty," he explained with a dissolute chuckle, "you'll find it doesn't much matter what you eat and drink. . . . Are we going to be indoors or outside? If it's indoors, may I finish my cigar? I usually forget to ask now that women smoke all the time and everywhere . . . You don't smoke either? I think you're wise. Smoking is perhaps not the easiest of vices to acquire, but I believe it's the most difficult of all to shake off." Looking critically round the drawing-room, he sat down in one of the only two comfortable chairs and tossed his hat, books and cigars into the other. "Well, I'm not going to talk shop after to-day, but I want you to tell me a little bit about yourself, Daventry. This my cocktail?"

Thereafter, though for a moment she be-

came suddenly tense, Paula felt that she was being relegated, with her new hat and dress, to the background. Before luncheon, during luncheon and after luncheon Mr. Scrope talked of the history, the politics and the ethics of his business. By tea-time, however, his questions had revealed or exposed the range of Arthur's knowledge; and he turned upon her without pity. At seven o'clock, as Paula bit down her craving for a cigarette and sat nonchalantly (but domestically) knitting while Mr. Scrope swallowed a couple of cocktails and lighted yet one more of his cigars, she felt that she had been subjected to as merciless an inquisition as her husband. The house and garden (a Paris manager must have a sense of style), literature and music (his wife must pull her weight at a party), the valorization of the *franc* and the Combières enquiry (they must both of them be well-informed and at the same time discreet): every avenue of conversation seemed to have been explored by the time that the exhausted host and hostess went up to dress.

"But what he thinks of us," she sighed, "I haven't the least idea. He just watches and puts his questions and smiles to himself. . . . Arthur, I don't know that I can stand a week of this!"

"Then the sooner you begin vamping him the better. I've put up the best show I can. . . . Come in!"

The door was opened cautiously; and Wilson entered, bearing in his arms a band-box with a flourish of black lettering: *Estelle, Galeries Fleuries, Cannes.*

"Mr. Scrope was sitting in the hall, ma'am," he explained; "and, as Mr. Daventry said this had to be done on the q t, in a manner of speaking, I took the liberty. . . ."

Carefully removing the lid of the band-box, he extracted two glasses, a tray and a cocktail-shaker.

"Wilson, you're a *genius*!" exclaimed Paula.

"I try to give satisfaction," answered Wilson with dignity. Then, turning to Arthur, he asked: "What wine will you be drinking for dinner, sir?"

It was on the tip of Arthur's tongue to say: "*If ever two human beings deserved a little champagne . . .*" Then he remembered the empty Paris office.

"I think," he answered, "I shall drink Vitel water. . . ."

"So shall I," Paula added loyally.

"And you'd better ask Mr. Scrope what

he'd like. White wine, whisky-and-soda, champagne. . . ."

When the question was repeated an hour later, Mr. Scrope looked first to see what his host and hostess were drinking. He then enquired, with his surface manner of consideration, whether anything was open; and, when Arthur assured him that his uncle's cellar was (he understood) well assorted and that anything within reason could be produced at a moment's notice, he elected for champagne. As there were no pints, he drank a bottle by himself and murmured at short intervals that his young friends really did not know what they were missing.

"Perhaps you're wise, though," he did not fail to add. "If you don't care for wine, it's a pity to cultivate a taste which is undeniably expensive. . . . Now, tell me: what do you do with yourselves in the evenings?"

The question was addressed to Paula; and she immediately suspected a trap. If they pretended that they remained at home, reading or doing cross-word puzzles, Mr. Scrope would label them as socially inadequate; if they admitted to looking in occasionally at the Casino, he might think: "*Frivolous. Pleasure-loving. This gambling . . . One knows how that sort of thing ends.*" . . .

"Here, do you mean?" she asked. "Well, we're taking things very quietly at the moment. Arthur was so much overworked before the doctor sent him away. . . ."

"Then you won't mind if I slip in to Cannes for an hour or two?" interrupted Mr. Scrope. "I'm too old for dancing, of course, but I like to look on. A lot of uncommon pretty young women in Cannes this year. I'd have proposed a little spree, if I'd thought it would amuse you, but I don't want your husband's doctor on my back. I shall just try my luck in the Casino. Do you know, I've been coming to the Riviera for the last forty years, not stinting myself either, and I've never yet failed to pay my expenses? . . . You won't wait up for me, will you?"

IV.

"THE one thing now wanting," said Paula at midnight, "is that we should discover he isn't Mr. Scrope at all, but an adventurer masquerading in his name."

They were smoking in her bedroom and, desperately and avengingly, sharing a bottle

of champagne. The wine, however, when drunk out of tooth-glasses, somehow tasted warm and flat. It was a mild night; and through the open windows of the next villa came the sound of dance-music, played by gramophone. At the Ambassadeurs, the fun would now be at its height.

"I feel," said Arthur bitterly, "that the one thing wanting is a confidential report from old Scrope to the board; that, while we're a most *worthy* young couple, we're altogether too prim and provincial for the Paris branch."

"I suppose he knows there is a branch in Paris," sighed Paula, "and that it's vacant at this moment. From his conversation . . ."

Arthur joined his sigh with hers; and they sat almost without speaking until Paula, surrendering to the fatigues of the day, began to undress. Though Mr. Scrope had been given a latch-key, Arthur felt that it would be not only polite but politic to sit up for his guest; and he was still practising policy and politeness when the old man returned at two o'clock, jubilant with a run of luck that had already paid for half his winter holiday.

"Though I wouldn't invite my worst enemy to gamble," he added, "unless it amuses him. If you don't want to make money and don't like losing it, the whole business must be a purgatory of boredom."

The second day of Mr. Scrope's visit was very similar to the first; the third to the second. In common justice it had to be admitted that their visitor made few demands on his entertainers; but neither Paula nor Arthur could escape the feeling that they were being watched and appraised. And neither had realized the lure of an innocent, conventional pleasure until it was withheld from them. At intervals they stole away in turn to the pine-trees on the Cap and smoked surreptitious cigarettes; their single moment of abandon came each evening when they retired to Paula's bedroom and Wilson entered unsmilingly with a band-box lettered *Estelle, Galeries Fleuries, Cannes*. Before Mr. Scrope's advent, they had, from time to time, criticized the butler's cocktails adversely; but ditchwater would have been sweet if they had felt that they were not supposed to drink it and that they were in some way cheating Mr. Scrope by drinking it without his knowledge.

Not until the fourth night when their guest had made enough money to cover all

possible expenses, did he refer again to the business of his company.

"Did you see about poor Morgan's death?" he enquired at the beginning of dinner. "Eh? What's that? What will I drink? I'll take whatever anybody else . . . But I was forgetting you two never touch wine! Well, Daventry, if you have any half-bottles of your uncle's most excellent champagne . . . You haven't? I'm not at all sure I ought to drink a bottle by myself *every* night. However . . . What was I saying? Oh, about Morgan. Now, what did the papers say about that?"

As Paula had destroyed the *Daily Mail* before her husband could read it, she took it upon herself to answer from memory.

"He died in his sleep, I think they said," she recalled. "And it came out that he'd had a bad heart for years."

Mr. Scrope wrinkled his nose and grunted: "H'm. That's what I *told* 'em to say, of course, but I wanted to know if there'd been any rumours. This is between ourselves: a business confidence," he added for Paula's benefit. "Morgan died of an overdose of some sleeping-stuff; and as he'd got it on a prescription from his doctor . . ."

The sentence ended in a shrug.

"But d'you mean he . . .?" Arthur began.

"Not a shadow of doubt," said Mr. Scrope. "Outrunning the constable. 'Borrowing' our money and not able to pay it back. I'd had my suspicions for some years, but I had nothing to go on. They lived very simply. So far as I know, he wasn't speculating. We paid him a good salary and a liberal entertaining-allowance . . ."

"Then what was the reason?" asked Paula.

Mr. Scrope smiled sourly before answering:

"I'm afraid your sex, madam, was once again to blame. An extravagant wife. I stayed a week with them on my way south; and, though one doesn't like to spy on one's hostess, I had to remember that Morgan was an officer of the company which I have the honour to control and that, in stopping with him, it was my duty to see how he represented the company's interests. Well, I had no fault to find with his office-work. And the entertaining was admirably carried out. What made me uncomfortable was the money that little Mrs. Morgan seemed to be spending. I had reason to know that she had no private means, but she was pouring

out a fortune on dresses and hats. Out of

five times that the front-door bell rang, four times it was a messenger from one of the most fashionable shops. I saw these dress-boxes and hand-boxes being carried in, I saw the names on them. And I knew that a crash was impending. . . . Curiously enough, I'd written to our general manager the day before the tragedy. I'd said Morgan must go. If a woman buys her frocks from Céline and her hats from Estelle, either she's so well-off that her husband has no need to toil away as our Paris manager, or else he's putting his hand in the till. And that's what Morgan was doing . . . , *had* been



"Mr. Scrope was very humorous, ma'am, oh, very humorous indeed. He looked at the name on the box and asked permission to see what he called your hat, ma'am. When he'd raised the lid, he sort of smiled, ma'am, and told me to bring the box along to his room if you'd finished trying on your hat."

doing for months. He'd be alive now, we should never have caught him if I hadn't gone to stay there, but it's an old maxim of mine that, when you employ married men, you must keep as close a watch on their wives as on them. . . . You're missing a very wonderful champagne, Mrs. Daventry . . ."

V.

"AND, if he hadn't come to stay here," said Paula on the last day of Mr. Scrope's visit, "you might have been given Paris by now. '*If a woman buys her frocks from Céline . . .*'" she quoted hysterically, "*and her hats from Estelle . . .*" It was only one, Arthur, and aunt Margaret paid for it!"

"Hardly worth explaining that to Scrope," Arthur sighed. The nerves of both were gone; and their tempers were going. "And we couldn't be in much deeper if you'd got half-a-dozen. He's seen that miserable box coming up here every night and he's formed his own conclusions. There's no fault to find with my office-work. We live simply; and, so far as he knows, I don't speculate. Our weak place, though, is that we can't be trusted not to outrun the constable. . . . It's bad luck. I don't mean that I'm blaming you," he ended in a tone which conveyed, as Paula realized glumly, that he meant nothing else.

"If I felt more sure of him, I'd make a clean breast of the whole business," she ventured desperately.

"And get us labelled as secret drinkers, hypocrites, liars . . .? My dear, it's enough that we've lost Paris; we don't want to have Scrope writing a confidential report to the general manager that I'm to be fired . . ."

He broke off as a knock fell on the door and Wilson came in to announce that Mr. Scrope's luggage had been put on his car and that he was waiting in the hall to say good-bye. Grimly determined to hide their disappointment under a smile, Arthur and Paula hurried downstairs and plunged into a fusillade of valedictory compliments. "I can't say how much I've enjoyed myself . . ." "It's been delightful to have you here . . ." "Now you're not coming to see me off, unless you *want* to go into Cannes . . ." "There's plenty of time, you know, sir . . ."

Mr. Scrope looked at his watch and made a hurried movement towards the door.

"Plenty of time for the Calais 'Blue'," he replied, "but I'm going to Paris. The

Paris 'Blue' starts half-an-hour earlier. Are you *really* coming? It's this wretched Morgan business," he explained, as Arthur and Paula got into the car. "We haven't appointed his successor yet; and, though you'd think we had a dozen men for the job, it's far from easy to find all the necessary qualities in one and the same candidate. To begin with, our Paris representative must be a man of good breeding, good education, good manners. He must be a good man of business and a man of the world. Morgan would have been ideal if he hadn't been ruined by an extravagant wife . . . However, I've managed to keep off shop for the last week; and I'm not going to break down now," he informed them with tantalizing finality. "We're in good time, I think. When the car has dropped me, it must take you back. And if you want to go anywhere first . . . The Galeries Fleuries are always worth a visit. I leave you to make your own arrangements."

An hour later, the Daventrys were back at Antibes. Though the sun was hot on the Croisette and the blue sky was reflected in an unruffled mirror of blue sea, Cannes—for this afternoon at least—had lost its charm; and, though they had seen the Paris "Blue" steaming out of Cannes with Mr. Scrope waving a hairy paw from his window, both Paula and Arthur felt that in some disturbing way they were not finished with him yet.

"I shouldn't be in the least surprised," said Arthur, seeking relief in defamation, "if he'd got Wilson to cash him a cheque on a bank where he had no account . . . What did I tell you?"

They were hardly inside the Villa Montcalm before their uncle's butler appeared with an air of unwonted embarrassment.

"I have the wine-book here, sir," he whispered to Arthur. "If you could spare time to run through it . . ."

His tone prompted Paula to ask if anything was amiss.

"We've been a little heavy on the gin this week, ma'am," Wilson explained. "Mr. Scrope . . ."

"Did he take a bottle to bed with him?" Arthur enquired.

"No, sir! It was just the cocktails before luncheon and dinner. And what I brought up to your room, sir. And what Mr. Scrope had when he was dressing . . ."

"You mean he had a second go?" asked Paula indignantly.

Wilson sighed apologetically.

"I feel I am to blame, ma'am," he replied.

"It was an accident, as you may say, on the first night. When I come to carry the box down from your room, I missed my footing, ma'am, and broke a glass. Mr. Scrope was very humorous, ma'am, oh, very humorous indeed. He looked at the name on the box and asked permission to see what he called your hat, ma'am. When he'd raised the lid, he sort of smiled, ma'am, and told me to bring the box along to his room if you'd finished trying on your hat. That was how he put it, ma'am."

"And this happened on . . . the first night?" Paula enquired faintly.

"The night he arrived, ma'am."

"That," said Arthur, "finishes it. My job's gone. In one, two days' time I shall get a letter . . ."

In two days' time a letter, addressed from Paris, arrived to inform his late host and hostess that Mr. Scrope had reached his destination in safety and comfort.

"And now," he added, "*I am in the thick of this tragic Morgan business. Before I left, I wanted to offer a piece of advice. Mrs. Daventry will at once think that I am going to recommend her not to buy a hat at Estelle's, but she will be wrong. I should not dream of shewing myself so impertinent and unappreciative. My recommendation, for what it may be worth, is that she should go on as she has begun: the woman who controls the small situations can control the big. I make her my compliments. For a moment, when I forgot that you were holiday-making, I lapsed into business and began to enumerate the qualities expected of a successful manager in an import-*

ant branch. He must be, I said, a man of affairs and a man of the world; but, first and foremost, I should have added, he must be a man of resource, a man of reserve, a man who runs his own show in his own way and a man who can conceal his feelings. A diplomatist, in short. It is surprising how few people can keep their own counsel or bridle their own emotions; and yet we are all of us liable to disappointments, annoyances, suspense, uncertainty. . . .

"When you both come back to England, I want you to dine with me and to discuss the question of Paris. If you would care to apply for the position . . ."

"If . . . you . . . would . . . care . . .," said Paula slowly. "And you called him pre-Victorian!"

"Of all the infernal old scoundrels . . .," cried Arthur. "He's been making fools of us for a solid week. Torturing us to see how much we could stand without squealing . . ."

"In his dotage, into the bargain," Paula continued softly.

A moment of silence followed, to be broken by the ringing of a bell. Wilson went to the front door and came back with a glisteningly white oval box. On the side and top, in dashing black, ran the words: *Estelle, Galeries Fleuries, Cannes*. On a card attached to the encircling ribbon were the words: "*With Mr. T. A. Scrope's compliments and best thanks.*"

"I don't quite know who wins over this," Paula murmured, as she began to unpack her new hat.

THE TWO CUCKOOS.

I HEARD two cuckoos call
Antiphonal

From darkening wood to darkening wood—
Cuckoo, cuckoo!—

Until my vagabond mood

Became as one with all

The twilight, clouds and dews and murmuring flood;

And like a star a dream shone through,

A new dream in the stead

Of an old dream but lately dead;

And as I wandered down the slopes

I felt the master of a thousand hopes—

Cuckoo, cuckoo!

WALLACE B. NICHOLS,

THE PRICE OF A WHITE MAN'S : : HEAD : :

By RALPH DURAND

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

WHEN Megobaniland was added to the British Empire its paramount chiefs put their thumb-marks to a treaty drawn up in Downing Street, one clause of which provided for the total abolition of slavery. This clause most of the paramount chiefs observed to the best of their ability. They decreed that slave-raiding must cease, that human beings must no longer rank with cattle as a conveniently self-portable form of currency, and that all those who possessed slaves must set them at liberty. The only serious opposition to the full enforcement of these decrees came from the slaves themselves. By tribal custom a slave who became too old to work was still fed by his master. Also if a slave was convicted of stealing a neighbour's pig, his owner had to pay the penalty. Consequently many of the slaves, especially the lazy ones, passively resisted their masters' efforts to set them at liberty. When the Commissioner reported this unforeseen difficulty Downing Street shrugged its shoulders and reflected that if a man's soul is so dead that he does not pant for freedom, it is impossible to make him pant for it. But Downing Street would have been horrified if it had known that one of the slaves that refused to be set free belonged to one of its own officials.

It was before he entered the service, and when he was in a country where no law ran, except tribal law, that Darrell, at great personal inconvenience, became a slave-owner. To escape being killed by his tribe, Chiteema "put himself under the shelter of the white man's karross" and Darrell, to save the man's life, consented to the arrangement. Though Chiteema was now his slave, he

paid him the current wages of a free man, three shillings' worth of brass wire per month. Chiteema was able to save the greater part of this because, being now an outcast from his tribe, he had neither a chief to whom to pay tribute nor a father to appropriate his earnings. After eighteen months he had saved enough to buy a cow. Darrell, meanwhile, had been appointed Collector of the Wanazoa District of British Megobaniland, and had started a small stud farm for the improvement of the local cattle herds, so the herding and grazing of the cow cost Chiteema nothing. At the end of another year, Chiteema bought another cow, and the first had made him the richer by a half-bred Shorthorn calf. At the end of five years he possessed no less than eight cows.

He was now, if not wealthy, at least prosperous, and he decided to marry. The minimum price of a wife among the Wanazoa was three cows. But Chiteema was ambitious. In his eyes there was as much distinction between an ordinary slave and the slave of a white man, as we should see between a lady's maid and a Lady of the Bedchamber. He therefore married the daughter of a chief's daughter, paying a *lobola* of seven cows down and getting the rest of his bride on credit. This addition to Darrell's household was destined to prove of the utmost importance. Mlulu, being a lady of rank, was in touch with the gossip of what, among the Wanazoa, corresponded to Court circles. As he waited at his master's table, Chiteema repeated much of this gossip. Darrell thus learned far more of what the Wanazoa were thinking about than they themselves would ever have told him. By his marriage the slave had become,

without realising it, a most useful Intelligence Officer.

Mlulu, of course, conveyed to her aristocratic friends all that Chiteema told her about his master. One day Darrell, commenting bitterly on the number of flies in the kitchen, said that a drastic improvement must be made, as he was about to marry. The news was passed on to the tribe, with the addition invented by Chiteema that the bride to be was the Great White King's daughter. Very soon afterwards Winifred Neville arrived on the lake steamer, stayed at the *boma* for a few hours, and went away again. Darrell did not tell his slave that for various reasons, the decisive one of which was the appalling prospect of having for a servant a man of such uncouth habits as his, she had broken off their engagement. When Mlulu asked him why she had gone, Chiteema, rather than confess ignorance, explained that she had merely come on approval and that Darrell, not having cattle enough for the purchase of a King's daughter, would shortly follow her, build a house in the King's kraal, and give his future father-in-law his services instead of paying *lobola*.

The news that the Collector was soon to leave them was received in the tribe both with delight and dismay. As among more democratically governed peoples, political opinion among the Wanazoa was divided. The minority party sighed for the good old days when no white man interfered with the ancient and profitable practice of cattle-raiding. The majority knew that Darrell had brought prosperity to the country, though they did not realise that it was by enforcing peace that he had done it. The latter party predicted that famine, as well as rapine, would return to the land if he left it, and took counsel together as to how his going might be prevented.

This division had the curious result of bringing about a temporary coalition between some of the extremists of both parties. Though many found that the innocuous lives that Darrell compelled them to lead were very dull, no one actually disliked him except the tribal magicians, whose incomes from fees had dwindled, in consequence of Darrell's frequently repeated assertion that all who professed to tell the future were impostors. One of them now suggested to some carefully chosen members of both political parties a plan that proved acceptable to both. He referred to the local belief that if one man kills another and is careful to preserve his skull, the spirit of the slain

man becomes the slave of the slayer. If Darrell were killed, he pointed out, the tribe would be free to go its own way again with this advantage, that his acknowledged superior powers could be secured to the use of the Wanazoa in perpetuity, for by methods known to themselves they could, if his skull was preserved as tribal property, compel his spirit to send rain, avert locust swarms, secure the tribe victory in war, or perform any other such service as was required of it. The plan was approved as sound and the magician had no great difficulty in finding three hundred young hot-heads—complete success could not be assured with a smaller number, because Darrell had a bodyguard of twelve trained soldiers of the King's African Rifle Corps—who undertook to kill him.

The utmost secrecy was enjoined on all concerned in the conspiracy because there were many members of the tribe—Matipa, the dethroned paramount chief, among them—who had a strong personal regard for the Collector. But after careful deliberation, as it was necessary to obtain reliable information as to Darrell's intended movements, it was decided to let both Mlulu and Chiteema into the secret, and to take drastic steps to ensure that the latter should not reveal it to his master. The conspirators promised Mlulu that if all went well Chiteema should have Darrell's stud herd for his own, and the *boma* for his kraal. Mlulu stipulated that in addition another wife should be found for him without payment of *lobola*. She was anxious for Chiteema to marry a second wife, for she considered the rougher kinds of housework to be beneath the dignity of a chief's granddaughter, and among the Wanazoa, when a man "adds a rafter to his house," the relative position of the two wives becomes analogous to that of house-keeper and housemaid. This also was promised. Added to the promise was a threat that if Chiteema warned his master, he should be buried up to his neck in sand and left to be pecked to death by vultures.

Some Africans make admirable servants, but Chiteema was not one of them. He was lazy, dirty, untruthful, and in the matter of such small things as Darrell's sugar and tobacco, a thief. But at bottom he had in full the quality that the best type of European is able to find in almost any African; he was staunchly loyal to his master. In the days that followed his admission to the secret, he did his work even more carelessly than usual, for he racked

his brains night and day for a means of saving his master without incurring the terrible vengeance of the conspirators. While still among his own people, he had been the apprentice of one of the tribal doctors, from whom he had learned a good deal about the medicinal properties of roots and herbs that the Royal College of Physicians would be the wiser for knowing, as well as much muddle-headed lore that they would quite rightly have scoffed at. He had been taught that a man can acquire physical strength by pounding a bull's frontal bone to powder and drinking it in water, perseverance by licking the sweat from a man's forehead, activity by rubbing his limbs with the kidney fat of a lion, and the power to see in the dark by eating the dried eyes of an owl. The first result of his anxiety for his master was the happy thought that possibly a meal of owls' eyes might have a beneficial effect on mental as well as physical vision, that in fact, if he could contrive that Darrell should eat some, the eyes of his mind might be opened, so that he would see for himself the danger that threatened him, without having to be told about it. It was some time before he was able to find a native doctor who had what he sought in stock, and he had to pay for it as much brass wire as he could earn in three months. Even then his time and his money were wasted. Since Winifred Neville had come and gone, Darrell had lost his appetite. He sent away untasted the dish that had cost Chiteema so much time, so much trouble and so much money to prepare!

The danger was now imminent. Chiteema racked his brains again and another inspiration rewarded him. He had noticed that rats have an almost uncanny power of evading blows aimed at them, and it seemed probable that if Darrell were to swallow a rat, he would himself acquire this useful attribute, which might save his life when the attempt was made to assassinate him. Rats are more easily found than owls. Chiteema had to go no farther than the *boma* kitchen to look for one, and he had learned as a child how to make cunning traps with string.

Darrell's appetite that evening showed no improvement. He swallowed a little soup, munched a biscuit, but waved away a curry that Chiteema had taken especial pains to make savoury.

"It is now three weeks since you have eaten as a man should eat," protested Chiteema. "To-day I cooked the fattest

hen there was in the pen. Moreover, I did not forget to fry the curry powder."

Darrell was touched by his slave's solicitude. He usually suspected him of being concerned only with his own reversionary interest in the food he cooked.

"You're a good fellow, Chiteema," he said. "I will try and eat something."

He took only one mouthful of the curry and spat it out. Then he drew the lamp nearer and minutely examined the contents of his plate. Unfortunately for the experiment, Chiteema had not been able to decide by any process of logic which was the material part of the rat to cook. The whole had, therefore, gone into the stew. It was a piece of fur that Darrell had spat out and his examination of his plate revealed tail-bones such as had never formed part of the anatomy of any hen ever hatched.

"Stand there, you," said Darrell sternly. "Stand where the light falls on your face. Now tell no lies. What filth is this that you have put in my food?"

Chiteema stood on one leg, scratched his skin with his toe-nails and fixed his eyes on the ceiling-cloth.

"It was the fattest hen in the——"

"Look me in the face and stand without moving till you have given a true answer."

In the past, master and slave had shared hardship and danger together. Darrell had, in consequence, much the same feeling towards Chiteema as a dog-lover has for a favourite dog. But he was no sentimentalist. If Chiteema had lied to him in the *bwalo*, he would have had no hesitation in ordering him to be flogged as an example to others. But now he adopted a slower, more subtle and, at the last, more reliable method of getting at the truth. Every time Chiteema averted his eyes he rapped out a sharp order to look him in the face. Otherwise he spoke no word. It was the torture by silence. His master's eyes, fixed so steadily and disconcertingly on his own, paralysed Chiteema's mind. His imagination seemed impotent to devise any lie that seemed in the least plausible. It was a contest in will-power, and inevitably the man with the more highly disciplined will won. Suddenly with a wail Chiteema flung himself on to the earthen floor and began a long, rambling, incoherent, but truthful statement.

Darrell changed his tone, made him stand up again, helped him with occasional questions, and heard him to the end.

"I said that you were a good fellow, Chiteema," he said at last. "When is it

that those fools are going to try and kill me?"

"On the night of the new moon."

"That is to-morrow. Then I can sleep in peace to-night at least. Now go and get me something fit to eat."

Peril was no novelty to Darrell, but this one touched him in a weak spot, for Winifred, whom he still loved, though she had passed out of his life, was involved in it. She was at the Mission Station, twelve miles away, waiting for the lake steamer to take her on

of an alien tribe, remained alive in the country. His first impulse was to march his Riflemen to the Mission Station. Then he realised that by so doing he would draw the danger in that direction. The Riflemen must protect the Mission Station without him to direct them. He must face death alone, and—this was a bitter thought—to avoid as far as possible arousing his assassins' blood-lust, it would be well to accept death tamely, without striking a blow.



"'I said that you were a good fellow, Chiteema,' he said at last. 'When is it that those fools are going to try and kill me?' 'On the night of the new moon.' 'That is to-morrow. Then I can sleep in peace to-night at least. Now go and get me something fit to eat.'"

the first stage of her journey back to England. The thought of her reminded him that it deeply concerned his honour to save the Mission Station, too, from harm, for it was on the strength of his belief that all danger of a native rising had passed, that the missionary had been allowed to bring his wife into the country. Though it was only his own head that was wanted, it was probable that his assassins would be so flushed with success when they got it, and he did not see how he could prevent them, that they would resolve not to lay down their spears while any white man or woman, any member even

At daybreak Darrell sent for the sergeant of the Riflemen.

"Listen with both ears," he said. "News has come to me that some foolish young warriors have eaten war medicine. Therefore you and your men are to march as fast as you may to the kraal of the Teacher of Good Tidings, to be a shield for him and all who live under the shelter of his karoos against the spears of the Wanazoa."

"Baba, our duty is to stand between you and the spears of the Wanazoa!"

"Your duty is to obey my orders. Send also one of your men to Matipa—No, if

those who have taken their spears in their hands should meet him, they would make his skull a nest for field-mice. Listen again. Faku is a wise man, and he knows that, whether I die or live, the shadow of the Great White King will still be over the land, and that if I am killed the Great White King will demand a heavy price for my head. As you go past his kraal, tell Faku to send a trusty messenger swiftly to Matipa to carry my words. Matipa is to send young warriors at once with all speed to the kraal of the Teacher of Good Tidings to fight at your side, if need be, under the Teacher's orders. Let the messenger carry also these words: 'If I die, Matipa is to govern the Wanazoa once more till the Great White King sends one to take my place. Let him govern wisely and well, lest the Great White King be angry with him.' Those are all my words for Matipa. There is also to be considered the white man who sells brass wire and cloth to the Wanazoa. Let Faku send to warn him that trouble is gathering and that he must guard his own head. My servant, too, is in danger. Take him with you. Those are all my words. I have spoken. Go. Fight well if you have to fight, for I think that, if the young warriors take my head, they will wish for the heads of such brave men as my Riflemen to place beside it."

An hour later Darrell heard someone on a hill-top in the direction of Faku's kraal shouting across a valley to a boy herding cattle on another hill-top. He could not catch the words, but he guessed that the shouter was spreading the news of the impending trouble. Within twelve or sixteen hours, probably every man, woman and child in the country would hear it. He smiled grimly as he thought of the consternation of the conspirators on discovering that their secret was known, and he laughed aloud when it occurred to him that the fact of his knowing of the conspiracy would still further enhance his reputation as a man possessed of supernatural powers.

He spent the morning writing a long letter to his unknown successor so that he could pick up the reins of government with as little delay as possible, giving him a list of all the minor chiefs and his opinion as to which of them needed a firm hand, which were well-meaning but weak, and which could be trusted to keep their people in order.

At noon Chiteema came to tell him that his midday meal was ready.

"Why are you here?" demanded Darrell. "I said you were to go with the Riflemen. Go now. If you run swiftly you will overtake them."

Chiteema had, on innumerable occasions, neglected to obey an order. Never, till now, had he flatly disobeyed one.

"I do not go," he said. "We die together."

"Let it be so," said Darrell. "When you join The Old Ones who went before, they will clap their hands in salutation and say, 'Here comes one who was a brave man.'"

After the meal—it was better cooked than usual: perhaps Chiteema wished to end worthily a service that had not been above reproach—Darrell sat in an easy chair, smoking one pipe after another, deep in thought. In case Winifred survived him, he wanted her to know that he had loved her till the end. But he did not know how to say it without seeming to reproach her for breaking her promise to him. He could not say that he forgave her without seeming to imply that she had need of his forgiveness. At last he decided that what he had to say had better be conveyed to her by someone who had more tact than himself.

He went to his desk again and wrote:

"DEAR OLD DAD,—

"If this ever reaches you I shall be dead. I have very good reason to believe that some of the Wanazoa want my skull to work magic with, and if they are determined to get it, I haven't got a strong enough armed force to stop them. I hope I shall die like an Englishman. Our ancestor, whom we are all so proud of, who had his head cut off for high treason on Tower Hill, did not flinch, and all the Darrells since his day, that I have heard of, who had the luck to die with their boots on, made good ends. I know that you will want to know how much of your early teaching has stuck—what I feel about the next life, I mean. Until now, I have never thought about it much. It has always seemed too remote, something I should have time to think about when I was old and past work. When I was a Boy Scout, when one of our fellows died, it was said that he was 'Called to Higher Service.' I expect that I shall find the next life something of that sort, a wider, fuller life, with greater interests, and more important work given me to do. All the same, I'm afraid I am shirking it a bit. Apart from a bit of natural funk, I should

have liked, before I went, to know whether any of the ideas that I have tried to get into the Wanazoa's heads have stuck, and whether any of the experiments I have made in coffee-planting and so on are ever going to be of any use to anyone.

"I am worried, too, about Winifred. Her life is in danger, too, because when once the Wanazoa start killing it takes a lot to satisfy them, and if she is killed it will be all my fault.

"The wedding did not come off. When she arrived here and saw at close quarters the sort of life she would have to lead, I couldn't help seeing that she funk'd it a little, and I realised that it was no life for her. If we had married, it would have spoiled two lives, for I could not have been happy if she had been wretched. We both agreed that the engagement must be broken off and that she must go home again. I expect that Mrs. Thurlby, who is always so down on other people because she believes that she has no faults of her own, will run round saying nasty things about Winnie—that she let me down and all that sort of rot. Don't let her. Tell her, as a dying message from me—tell everyone—that I alone am to blame for asking her to come out to me. If Winnie escapes out of the country, please find a suitable opportunity to tell her that I said this.

"I haven't made a will so you will come in for what money I have. It's not such a bad amount, because here at the Back of Beyond there has been no temptation to spend, and I have been able to save the greater part of my pay. I suppose it is no use asking you not to waste money on a memorial, so if you do put up a tablet in the church, engrave on it—'*Also in memory of Chiteema, a faithful pagan black, who voluntarily shared his master's death.*'

"And now, dear old Dad, God be with you till we meet again!"

There was still one letter that Darrell wanted to write. He took another sheet of paper and began:

"DEAR SIR HUMPHREY,—

"Long before this gets into your hands you will know that I have been killed by a party of irresponsible Wanazoa, who want my head for *ufiti*. A subordinate ought not to have the cheek to dictate to his superior officer, but I want very strongly to urge you not to take the matter too seriously. It isn't a case in which a punitive force is

necessary, because it is only a few who are going to make fools of themselves. In fact, a punitive force would do a lot of harm, because it would seem like an affair of white versus black, and many who will be quite innocent of my death would be prodded up to take sides with the culprits, and a general rising would be almost inevitable, whereas if you treat it merely as an ordinary criminal affair to be settled by police methods, no one will be involved except the actual criminals.

"In a letter addressed to my successor I have given a list of the villages, so far as I have been able to get the information, to which the men who are out to get my head belong. May I suggest that a strong party of Riflemen should be sent to garrison each village—but one at a time, lest the tribe as a whole gets the wind up? Long before they get there my murderers will have gone into hiding in the hills. I suggest that the women of the villages should be put under open arrest—not allowed to go outside except to fetch water—and that the men should be turned out and told to go and catch the murderers. The men would have a tough time of it; separated from their grain stores with nothing to eat except what they could find in the bush, and knowing that work in the cornfields would be hung up till the women were set at liberty again, it wouldn't be long before they brought in the culprits, and by the means I suggest they would be brought to trial without bloodshed, and particularly without scaring the Wanazoa into rebellion. As to what the offenders should get perhaps I have no business to offer an opinion, but I suggest that a maximum penalty of a year's hard labour for the ringleaders should meet the case.

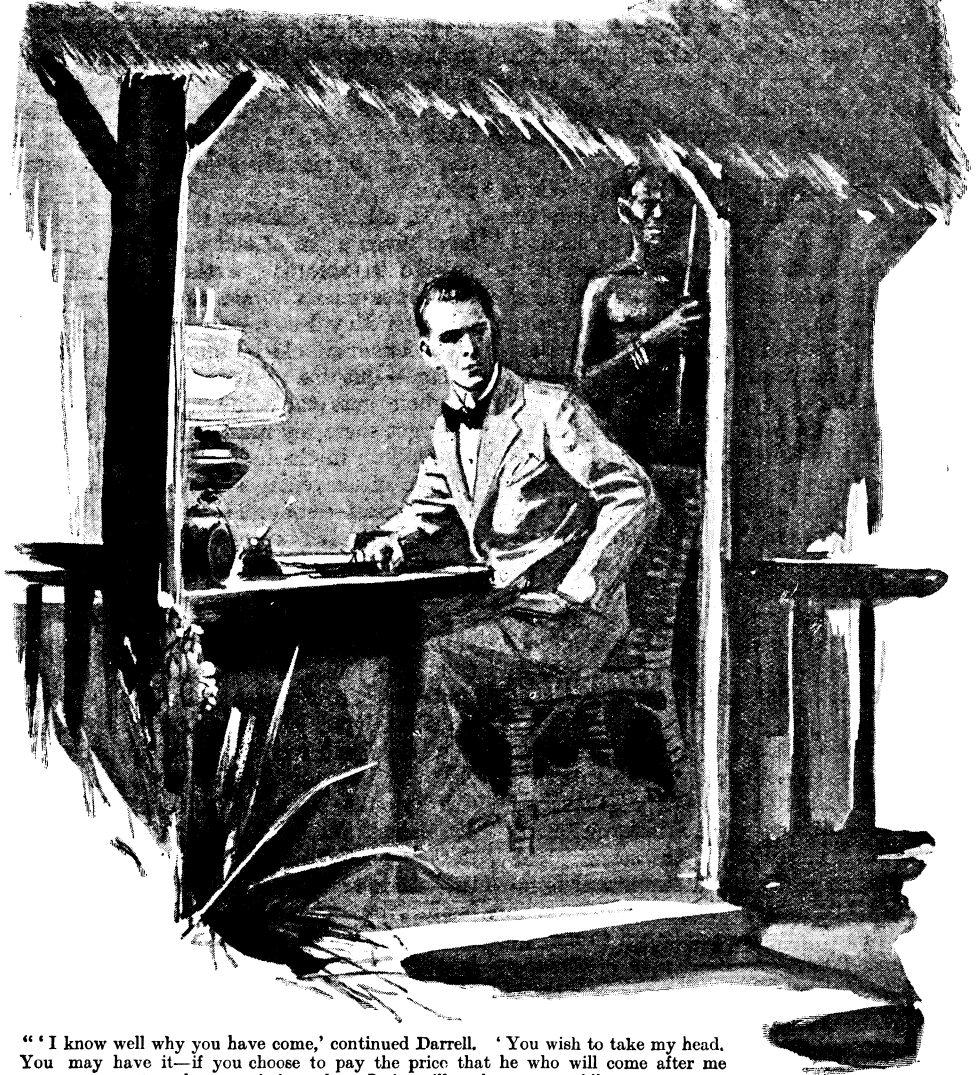
"I like my people and I should hate to leave them a legacy of trouble. When you come to think of it, the fact that they want my head shows that they like me—or at any rate appreciate what I have done for them well enough to want to have my essential spirit—my *ego*, I think philosophers call it—among them for keeps. So I ought to feel very much flattered instead of annoyed with them.

"I can't close this without thanking you for the way you have always backed me up in all I tried to do, and for all the kindness that you and Lady Stark have always shown me."

Darrell locked all the letters he had

written in a steel uniform case and wrote "Please forward to H.M. Commissioner" on a label that he attached to the handle.

pass out of sight the canoe that had carried Wini-



"'I know well why you have come,' continued Darrell. 'You wish to take my head. You may have it—if you choose to pay the price that he who will come after me to rule you, sitting where I sit, will make you pay.'"

He did not suppose that his murderers would loot it, because no native-made tool or weapon was strong enough to open it. Lest they should set fire to the *boma* after killing him, he put it well out of the way of burning thatch and hoped that his successor would find it there when he came.

By this time, the sun's edge was touching the horizon and Darrell went out to enjoy his last sunset. He sat down at a point from which he had a wide view of the lake, the same point from which he had watched

fred out of his life. Slowly the sun sank till only a finger-nail rim of burnished copper showed for a moment and was gone. A great cloud, shaped like a pair of wings and reaching from horizon to zenith, that a few moments before had been fleecy white, flushed scarlet and changed to a triumphal arch. Below it and beyond it the sky of pure gold, "like unto pure glass," changed from gold to opal, from opal to sapphire, from sapphire to amethyst, while from the east spread the star-spangled curtain of

night, as if Azrael were drawing a jewel-studded pall over an emperor's bier.

As Darrell watched the day die in splendour, he thought of the death that he was to die that night. He had leisure to think of it now and he found that he looked at it from a curiously detached point of view. Rightly regarded it was a very insignificant affair. Of the people at home who might read in their morning paper that Peter Darrell had been murdered by the Wanazoa, few would have ever before heard of the Wanazoa, and fewer still would know who Peter Darrell had been. His name mattered nothing.

Who can recall off-hand the name of the *Stella's* stewardess who gave her life-belt to a passenger as the ship was sinking beneath her feet? Or that of the American post-office girl who remained on duty, water rising around her feet, telephoning to outlying country farms a warning that the Missouri was in flood, till the water silenced her for ever and carried her away, her earpieces still clamped to her head? His death mattered nothing, but the manner in which he met it mattered a great deal. For the sake of the work that he must leave behind him, he must show his murderers how an Englishman could die, so that they might learn



"There was a movement in the crowd as each man tried to jostle his neighbour to the front, but no one answered."

the useful lesson that an Englishman can be killed, but cannot be conquered.

Chiteema came to tell his master that his evening meal was ready. Darrell was glad of the interruption because now that he had nothing more to do time dragged heavily, and with nothing else to occupy his thoughts it was becoming less easy to stifle his natural human shrinking from death. He was glad, too, because the fact that Chiteema had gone on imperturbably with his normal routine work, showed that the prospect of death was not scaring him unduly.

"What is death?" he asked, as he helped himself to soup. "What do your people think death is?"

"*Baba!* It is the crossing of a river. The Old Ones who went before us are on the other side. When a man is sick they take counsel among themselves. If they think it is time for him to cross the stream, they let his spirit pass. If not, they drive it back. Sometimes, while the old ones are talking the spirit has to wait too long and it becomes small, and then if it comes back to the body, the body is ever afterwards weak."

"And on the other side? What shall we do on the other side?"

"We shall drink the blood of the beasts that those who stay behind sacrifice to us."

"But you are a stranger among these people. If no one of those who stay behind sacrifice to you, what then?"

"I will send locusts to their corn and murrain to their cattle. Also, I who have been a slave in this world shall have slaves of my own when I have crossed the river, and I shall drink the blood that is sacrificed to them."

"How? Who will they be?"

"The spirits of those I shall kill to-night. I shall not die alone. Always the spirits of those that a man kills in fair fight go before him to tell the Old Ones that he is coming, and to become his slaves on the other side of the river. I shall kill two, perhaps three, of these dogs of Wanazoa before I die."

As soon as he had eaten, Darrell went to the *boma* gate and opened it wide. Then he walked for a while in the garden that in spite of all his efforts had never looked much more beautiful than a slum backyard. There was nothing homelike about it, nothing of which he wanted to take a sentimental farewell. At best, the *boma* had been a mere camping-place, huts in it had given him shelter from rain and sun, the stockade

surrounding it, protection from overbold lions, nothing more. The place seemed very deserted without his bodyguard of Riflemen. Its loneliness depressed him. Presently he went to the hut that was his sitting-room, called for a lamp, and, more to cheat the dragging hours than in hopes that it would ever be of any use to anyone, he busied himself with a vocabulary of the Wanazoa language that he had devoted much of his spare time to compiling. Later he carried the lamp and his papers to the table in the *bwalo*. It seemed fitting that if he must die at the hands of his people, he should meet his death in the place from which he had ruled them. Chiteema, carrying a spear in his hand, came and squatted on the ground near his feet. He laid down the spear and clasped his knees with his arms. Presently he began to hum: at first only a note or two at a time that he hummed over and over again, added to bit by bit till he seemed satisfied: then little by little he added words to the music till a song such as canoemen improvise to cheer their labour took shape.

"What is that song?" asked Darrell.

"It is new to me."

"It is a new song," answered Chiteema. "It is the Song of the Slayer."

To Darrell it suggested a very early edition of the *Song of Deborah and Barak*.

"Chiteema died. While his spear drank blood one stabbed him from behind.

He went to the Old Ones. But he did not go alone. Aha! Who are all ye that come? said the Old Ones. Who sent ye, men of the Wanazoa?

They answer: Chiteema has sent us to build him a house among you. Aha!

Come, ye hyenas! Gather, ye jackals! Chiteema has made a feast for you.

Vultures swoop down from the sky and praise the name of Chiteema:

Chiteema, the valiant; Chiteema, the meat-giver; Chiteema, the slayer of men. Aha!"

He was so pleased with the song that he sang it over and over again, till Darrell knew it by heart. Suddenly he stopped short in the middle of a line, stood up and listened.

"They come," he said.

"Stand behind me and see that no one stabs me in the back," said Darrell. "But on no account strike till one strikes you. That is my last order to you."

* * * * *

The men who had pledged themselves to secure Darrell's skull had made preparations as elaborate as if they were preparing to attack a whole tribe. They had ceremonially eaten a mixture compounded of the dried flesh of elephant, leopard and poisonous

snake ; elephant's flesh to make them strong and tireless, leopard's to make them agile and swift to strike, snake's to make their blows deadly. They had danced the war dance all through one hot night. The magician who had engineered the conspiracy had sprinkled them with some medicine, of which he only knew the ingredients, to bring them luck. And for the sake of secrecy all this had been done, not in front of an admiring crowd, but in a remote clearing in the depths of the bush. Yet, at the last, when it lacked only a few hours to the time when they were to set out, they discovered that their errand and its purpose was known throughout the country-side. Many—most of them—would have abandoned the enterprise altogether, but the magician, fearing that he would not long remain at liberty if Darrell were allowed to live, declared that war-medicine had the most terrible physical effects on such as ate it and then refrained from going to war.

So the warriors set out on their errand, but with little heart for the job. The conviction that there was a traitor among them was in itself disconcerting. Instead of being able to take the *boma* by a surprise attack, they expected to find it newly strengthened and vigilantly guarded. One small advantage they had. Since surprise was now out of the question they were able to sing as they marched, trying to lash their courage to boiling-point by chanting praises of themselves and the mighty blows they meant to strike. But a battle that is undertaken with misgiving is already half lost, and the war chant died dismally away before half the march was done.

When they reached the *boma* no Rifleman opened fire on them, no sentry challenged them, and the gate stood wide open. Beyond it they could see the man they had come to kill sitting in the place from which he tried *milandu*, a lamp at his elbow, calmly writing in a book. They sneaked silently through the gate but jostled for places at the side of the throng to avoid the responsibility of striking the first blow. It was obvious that the white man intended to defend himself, not with arms, but with some unseen and therefore presumably very powerful magic.

Stealthily though they approached, their naked feet made some noise even in the soft dust. The white man put down his pen and raised his head, and each man—forgetting that one who sits in a circle of light can see but a very short way beyond it—

felt that the resolute eyes were fixed especially on himself.

"*Funani*?" demanded Darrell sternly. "What do you want?"

There was a movement in the crowd as each man tried to jostle his neighbour to the front, but no one answered.

"I know well why you have come," continued Darrell. "You wish to take my head. You may have it—if you choose to pay the price that he who will come after me to rule you, sitting where I sit, will make you pay. Whether that price will be a big one or a small one, I do not know. Perhaps he will burn your villages and take away your cattle. Perhaps, instead of burning your villages, he will send armed men to occupy them till such time as you, getting tired of hiding like baboons among the rocks on the mountain-side, come in and surrender. When you have surrendered, I think that the youngest among you—those who have come to kill me because they were afraid of being thought cowards if they refused—will be set to work at road-making with chains fastened to their ankles, for two, three, or it may be five years. But I think that the elders among you will be sent to join the Old Ones beyond the river that can never be re-crossed. I have said that I do not know what the price of my head will be. I know only that there will be a price to pay for it."

Darrell picked up his pen and went on writing. The warriors began to whisper to each other. There was a general feeling that since they could not even guess at the strength of the unknown magic on which the white man was relying, it was advisable to discuss whether it would not be better even now to back out of the enterprise. Darrell lifted his head and looked fiercely round.

"Silence in the *bwalo*!" he commanded sternly.

A half-guinea clock had a permanent place on the *bwalo* table, and it happened, though Darrell had never used it as such since he had trained himself to wake at whatever hour he wished, that it was an alarm clock. It now occurred to him that it might be made to enhance the impression that he had already made. He wound up the alarm and set it to go off in five minutes.

"Listen," he said. "I am busy and I wish to be alone. Take my head if you will, but do not stay here disturbing me. In a few minutes this thing will speak and if any man is still in the *bwalo* when it has finished speaking, he shall be made a

prisoner and set to work on the roads till next year's harvest. I have spoken."

For a few moments there was a tense silence broken only by the shuffling of feet as those in the rear tried to push those in front up to the dais. Then the alarm went off with the startling suddenness of its kind. Before it had finished ringing, the *boma* gate was choked with the heaving bodies of men struggling to escape from magic greater than they had ever known,

heard of or imagined. Bluff, threats and the effect on strained nerves of the breaking of a tense silence with a most disconcerting racket, had all contributed to Darrell's victory, but it was the calm, bedrock courage of the man that had achieved most of the miracle.

He opened the uniform case and tore up all that he had written that day.

"You can go to bed, Chiteema," he said. "We do not die to-night."

A further episode in the career of Peter Darrell will appear in the next number.



CHIMING LONDON.

HEAR the Bells of London Town!—
 How they boom and clamour down
 Through the misty, thrilling air
 With a strange, elusive, rare,
 Wild, intoxicating noise
 Like the golden-throated joys
 Of Angelic legions singing
 Psalm on psalm, their voices flinging
 Down the rhapsody and ringing
 Of the Bells of London Town:

Ah, the Bells of London Town!—
 Where the folk go up and down
 With a sorrowful sad air
 As though happiness were rare;
 Toiling hard in grime and noise
 For their very little joys:
 Yet for these, for these, the singing
 Of those Angels downward winging,
 Lovely messages out-flinging
 Past the rhythmic, rhyming, ringing,
 Swinging Bells of London Town!

CLAUDINE CURREY.

GRANVILLE BANTOCK AND ◉ HIS MUSIC ◉ A PERSONAL STUDY

◉ By WATSON LYLE

FEW who saw the recent production of "Macbeth" at the Princes Theatre, by Sybil Thorndike, can have come away unimpressed by the original conception of the beautiful music written for it by Granville Bantock. Here was music that was no mere commentary upon the action of the play, in the hackneyed way of the "incidental" filling-in, but an expression in sound, and rhythm, of the emotional essence of the tragedy, built up from little more than a skirl of the pipes, to an importance, and an intensity, that kept pace with the plot, and more and more became an integral part of the human destinies worked out upon the stage. It achieved a oneness with Shakespeare that could only be attributed to the vivid poetic imagination of the composer and a technical facility and long experience in handling his medium that allowed him to give unfettered expression to his ideas.

Melody, that vital spark in the body spiritual of music, is abundantly present in the compositions of Granville Bantock. It permeates his art, from comparatively slight songs to his big instrumental and choral works, with the unfailing, easy flow of a Schubert strengthened, on occasion, by the dramatic forcefulness of a Beethoven, whilst remaining unmistakably individual in expression. This individuality is evident in certain rhythmic mannerisms, and he is able to give to his themes (his tunes) a turn apposite to the prose, or verse, set. He has the knack, in fact, of saying (musically) the right thing, at the right moment. The characteristic is noticeable in his numerous works written to a literary or other pro-

gramme, and, of course, in his vocal music, as well as in his contributions to chamber music where the stricter style of writing that is customary makes its appearance less expected.

Granville Bantock is amongst those composers who have inevitably gravitated towards the service of their art from some quite remote interest, such as Sibelius, who was trained for the legal profession, and Tchaikowsky, who, like Bantock, was educated with a view to entering the civil service of his country. The son of an eminent surgeon, he was born in London on August 7, 1868, and when he came to the decision that led to the development of his natural bent towards a musical career, he studied at first, for a little, at Trinity College, London, next at the Royal Academy of Music, distinguishing himself during his first term there, in 1889, by winning the Macfarren Scholarship. Even in these early days from his fertile imagination and busy pen began the steady flow of compositions in nearly all the recognised forms (and some others!) that he has continued to produce ever since. The most important of his works to be performed at that time at the R.A.M. was a concert version of his first opera "Caedmar," which was eventually staged at the Olympic Theatre in 1892.

Thereafter there came a period of mixed experiences that were ultimately of great value in practical training for the work of composition. Like Schumann, he, about this time, edited a musical periodical, *The New Musical Quarterly*, with which he was connected for three years. He also toured the country as a conductor of musical

comedies, and similar productions, winding up this phase of his practical initiation into varied aspects of his profession by a tour round the world with an opera company. It is of interest, in view of his song-cycles written to texts taken from Chinese poets, to record that, when in San Francisco with the opera company, he one night went to explore the Chinese quarters of that cosmopolitan city, and was set upon by a band of roughs, who shot at him. Fortunately, he escaped unhurt.

After returning from this world tour he again made London his headquarters in 1896, and his re-entry into the musical life of the Metropolis began during the winter season with a concert solely of compositions by modern English composers. This amounted to a daring independence of action in these days, for we were, at that time, still in the grips of the late Victorian unquestioning faith in the classics, and the music made by foreign musicians. The year following this original concert scheme, he took over the conductorship of the military band that then supplied the music at the Tower, New Brighton. Under his progressive influence it underwent a metamorphosis into an orchestra, and attracted wide attention, giving programmes of modern as well as classical compilation. The enthusiasm and initiative denoted by these programmes led to an invitation to go to Antwerp in February, 1900, to conduct a concert of British music, and it was then that some of his own music was heard outside of England for the first time. That autumn he received the appointment as Principal of the Birmingham School of Music, and was made Professor of Music at Birmingham University (Arts Section), positions which he still holds.

Although my first meeting with Bantock, about four years ago, was of a transitory description, amounting to little more than the rite of introduction, performed by a friend of both, Ursula Greville, the gifted soprano, I received an initial impression of a very genial and fascinating personality, which was confirmed by later, and fuller, acquaintance. Personal magnetism is a quality that eludes precise analysis, but I should hazard the opinion that, in Bantock, it springs from his overflowing kindness, varied sympathies, both within and without his art, and the wide scope of a cultured mind.

Beauty in its numerous guises appeals to him unfailingly: beauty of sound, the sounds of nature, of the speaking human

voice, and, of course, of music; beauty of thought, finely expressed in everyday speech, and in poetry and prose; the beauty of colours, in vivid contrasts, and in softer tints; and the beauty of flowers, birds and animals. There is a large and delightfully arranged garden at his home in the Midlands, with stretches of lawn and trees and shrubs in plenty, as well as more formal flower borders, all providing congenial harbourage for his special friends, the birds. There is even a squirrel visitor to the tall tree tops. At his other home in Wales rugged, primitive nature is close at hand, with the impressive grandeur of mountains filling the vista in one direction, and the sylvan beauty of flower-grown woodlands (in spring and summer) in the other. Whenever the many engagements in connection with his duties in, and about towns, permit, he loves to go off to that mountain fastness. The use of the last word seems unavoidable when one thinks of the simple dignity of his bearing, and his fine head, with its mass of hair, and well-grown, albeit carefully kept, beard, all suggesting some skald of old—an impression not quite dispelled by his modern tweeds, and the easy informality of his manner.

At our second meeting my recognition of a little African bird, a green singing finch, kept in his study, led to the discovery of a common fondness for pets of all kinds. We talked much more about past and present, two- and four-legged "belovèds" than about music. I have had some odd furred and feathered friends since childhood onwards, but it was not long before I found out, to my chagrin (hobbyists cannot help being envious, in a friendly way, now and then!), that the composer had me beat in the matter of unusual pets, his including a lion cub—only a little one, 'tis true—owned for a short time, and two large apes.

An apartment in the basement of the house was given over to the accommodation of the monkeys, and for a time all went well. One fine day, however, the pair escaped to the upper regions, and were discovered in a bedroom, sitting upon the dressing-table, industriously engaged in destroying everything within reach, and of course jabbering, and grimacing horribly. Evidently monkeys are of one mind with Marguerite in the Jewel Song in Gounod's "Faust" when she sings, "Mirror, mirror, tell me truly!" Not for them the sedulous practice of the conventional simper! Then there were the pair of piebald rats, constant companions of their owner. He taught them to walk across a

cord, held tightly stretched, and when they met near the middle, one would swing down underneath, so that they might pass each other without either being knocked off the improvised tight-rope. With the exception of the singing finch first-mentioned—now an old favourite, who was rescued in a

bird-catching (and torturing) propensities. The dogs are an engaging trio: "Lorna" (sobriquet, "Punk"), a Sealyham, whom I at once adopted; "Maive," a bonny Alsatian, who jealously pushed Punk aside to receive a share of the caresses; and "Solomon," a black Cocker spaniel so named from his habitually solemn expression, i.e. solemn-man.

Dogs provide a sure index to the nature of the human companionship in their homes. What a difference there was between the affectionate, playful behaviour, and the ready understanding, of these three animals, and the poor, cowed, and often churlish creatures one meets with in homes where the milk of human kindness has long ago dried up!

If the music of a composer possesses the quality of sincerity that is an attribute of all great, creative art, some phases at least of his inner nature will be reflected in his work, and we frequently notice this very human side of Bantock in his music. His songs for and about children, of which there are

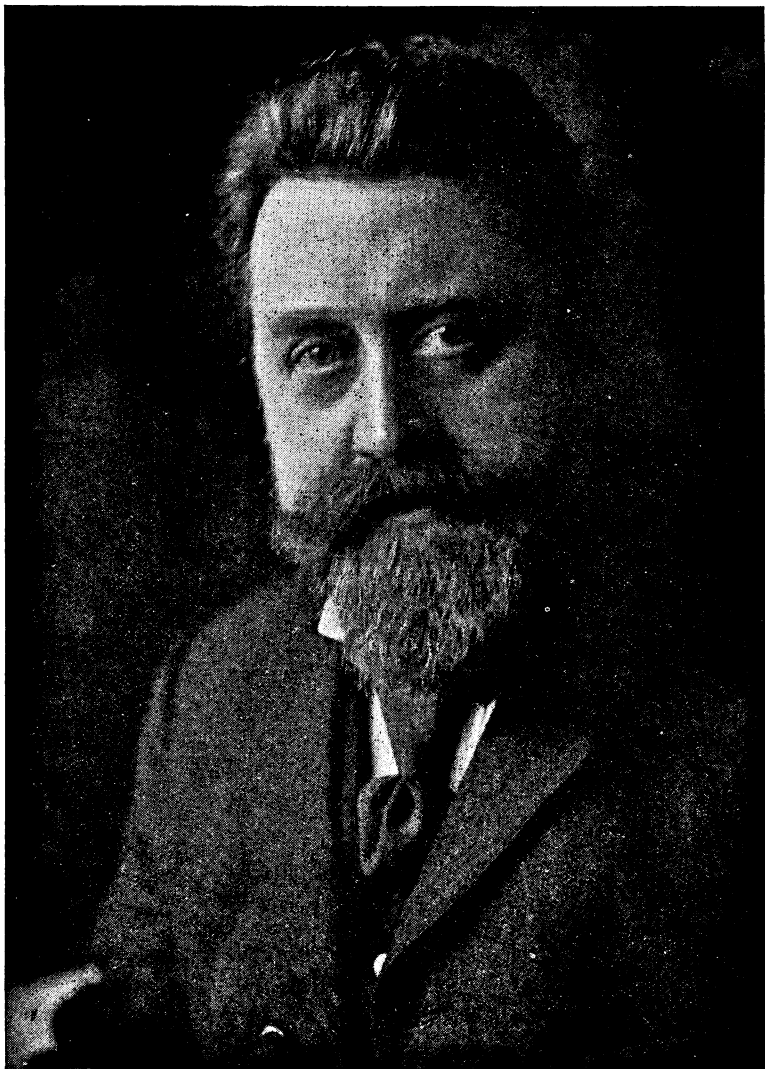


Photo by]

GRANVILLE BANTOCK.

[R. Haines.

battered condition from a cageful in a shop, and nursed back to happiness—all the menagerie is now domiciled at the Zoo.

Of course, he is not bereft of animal friends. The household still includes three dogs, and some cats. He is not, however, fond of these latter creatures because of their callous

several groups, are instinct with an unspoilt delight in simple pleasures. Take, for instance, "The Seasons," from a set of five songs for children to words by Alfred Hayes. Most tone poets create a sense of storm and stress, or else employ desolate, attenuated, dreary sounds to suggest winter; but to the mind of a child, a normal, healthy child,

the word winter suggests time of jollity, and snow stands for tobogganing and snow-balling, an attitude of mind that the poet has indicated and the composer has realised as the joyous climax in the little song referred to, instead of uncomfortable physical reactions which might occur to the adult mind.

So, too, in his songs that express the deeper note of human love, and passion, such as the song-cycle written to Browning's "Ferishtah's Fancies," and his much earlier "Dramatic Lyrics." If we listen to even one from the first, "Plot-culture," with Bantock's music that rushes to meet the throbbing intensity of the words, "Let me love, entire and whole, Not with my Soul! Eyes shall meet eyes, and find no eyes between, Lips feed on lips, no other lips to fear!" we become conscious of the divine fire illumining the art of the composer as it does that of the great Victorian poet. And if we take a song of a quite different type, "A Woman's Last Word" (from the "Dramatic Lyrics"), we find the conciliatory spirit, and the deep tenderness of the poem intensified by the soupçon of poignancy in the lovely and naively fresh music wedded to it. I must content myself in the present article with naming these two songs, from his large output in this form alone (well in the neighbourhood of a hundred), as representative of his gift of expanding the poetical conception of the words he selects for a musical setting. Too often the song-composer, however fine his music may be in itself, gets no farther than affixing a kind of musical excrescence to the outside of the poem.

Going rather beyond the dimensions, and the form, of the song-cycle even, is the music that he has written to the literary inspiration of four "Pagan Chants" from Wilfrid Thorley's "Confessional." They date later (1923) by three years than the example from the "Dramatic Lyrics" of Browning mentioned, and are almost elaborate enough in conception for a simple stage setting. He does not hesitate to employ dissonances freely as in the second number, "The Crippled Faun," when the text demands the suggestion of primitive emotions, like terror, and revenge, to the listener. But when he lays on harmonic colour in vivid hues he does it for definite reasons arising from the appeal of the music, so that the ear is not offended as it readily is by the daubs of garish tone-colour introduced, patch-wise, by some uninspired composers who will write in what is conveniently termed the "modern idiom," by hook or by crook!

Early in his career as a composer Bantock appears to have felt an inspirational urge in subjects of Eastern interest, or of definitely Oriental origin. Apart from any extra-æsthetic concern literary texts of this description may have for him, they provide scope, and a congenial outlet, for the exercise of his very original constructive ideas, and his gift in creating unusual effects of tone-colour. Six sets of "Songs of the East" for piano (or orchestra) and voice preceded his setting of the quatrains of Omar Khayyám for solo voices, chorus and orchestra, a big work that brought him prominently before the public, and firmly established him as a composer of note.

At a much later period—1918–1920—he turned his attention to adaptations into English, from Chinese poets, chiefly by L. Cranmer-Byng, and composed during that time four sets of five songs each, for the final set of which, however, the translations are by E. Powys Mathers. There can be no doubt whatever about the sensitive response of his æsthetic sense to the words of the poems, many of which date back to the earliest times, *Anno Domini*, and to their exotic atmosphere. "The Old Fisherman of the Mists and Waters" provides another example of his power to create the exquisite miniature as well as to attain magnificence in the bigger forms. By an harmonic alchemy he creates not only the appropriate suggestion of amorphousness, but also the philosophic serenity of the poet of A.D. 750. The numbing-horror of "The Ghost Road" and the brilliant imagery of "The Feast of Lanterns" must have impressed anyone who has heard these two popular excerpts from the Chinese songs sympathetically interpreted by a good artist, like Anne Thursfield. To this Eastern manifestation of his inspiration belong also many fine part-songs, such as "The China Mandarin" and "Song of the Japanese Dwarf Tree," for which the poems are by Helen F. Bantock, the composer's wife, and others to words by James Elroy Flecker, and translations from the Chinese by L. Cranmer-Byng and Allen Upward. And there is his vivid setting, for unaccompanied male voice choir, of "Kubla Khan," that poetic ecstasy of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Celtic folk-lore as represented in folk-song has interested him deeply. In original compositions, as well as in settings of many of the Hebridean folk-songs collected by Mrs. Kennedy-Fraser, he reveals an intimate sympathy with their mysticism,

mythology, and profession of paganism. His exact appreciation of the tone-colour obtainable from the use of unaccompanied human voices serves him well in the plastic use he makes of this medium to simulate, in the harmonic background (accompaniment) for chorus of mixed voices, the sighing of the breeze, and the sough of the waves, as a foil to the rich tones of a contralto voice crooning the song "An Cadal Trom" ("The Seal-Woman's Croon") with its tragic burthen of the sorrows of "the children of the King of Lochlann" (the seals, monarch of the Celtic wonderland beyond the seas. Similarly in his setting for the same arrangement of voices of the lovely "Am Bron Mara" ("Sea Sorrow"), melancholy as the cold grey sea that is inevitably so real a factor in the lives of the Islanders. They have their lighter moods, of course, being, beneath a sometimes forbidding exterior, warm-hearted, and gay, as expressed in the gracious "Oran Buaile" (one of the Milking Songs) or the "Smugglers' Song." The lovely "Celtic Poem," for violoncello and piano, likewise belongs to this source of inspiration—the mythology of the Islands. Its "programme" derives from a conception of Tir-nan-Og, the Celtic Heaven, or Land-of-the-ever-Young, to which magic isle a white barge is said to ferry the souls of the elect across the waves. The poem is rich in melodic beauty well suited to the special tone-quality of the 'cello "voice." Bantock has written frequently for this expressive instrument, e.g. a Fantastic Poem, a Sonata in G minor (for 'cello alone), and the intensely moving "Pibroch," for which the accompaniment is more expressive when played by harp instead of piano. Another chamber music piece that is amongst his comparatively limited contributions to musicians' music is the finely written Sonata in F Major for viola and piano, with its vigorous opening, and the gay rondo that forms the last movement, between which there is an expressive middle movement.

One of the biggest, and certainly one of the most original works (and this superlative means much as applied to a composer whose whole output avoids the commonplace without apparent effort), is his Choral Symphony for unaccompanied voices, "The Vanity of Vanities," the text being from Ecclesiastes. "Choral" symphonies, from the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven onwards, have been as instrumental as vocal, or more so, in their "instrumentation," so

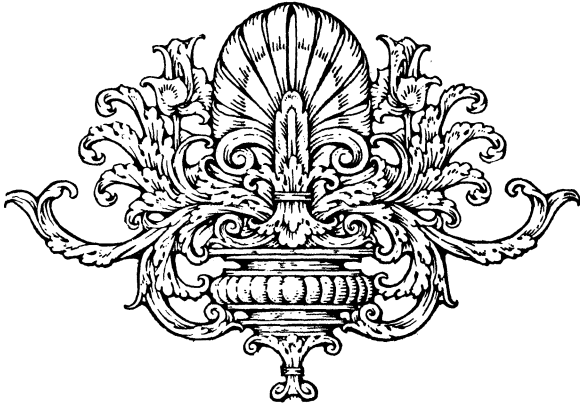
to say; but here is a work, in the uses made of the themes, or tunes, and in its construction, following the symphonic design, which depends solely for its colour, and performance, upon the six distinctive types of voices—soprano, mezzo-soprano, contralto, tenor, baritone, and bass. Not all the time is the choir employed in singing words, nor, of course, do the voices all sing at the same time throughout; there are, on the contrary, many passages where the voices in use only vocalise (i.e. hum) the notes written in the score, with a blending of their distinctive tone-qualities that is indescribably beautiful in effect. Here, in truth, is choral music *in excelsis*, foreseen in its expressive power and independence of instrumental support by Bach, but not even sensed by Handel, that "ever-present help in time of need" of the average choral society conductor. "The Vanity of Vanities" was published in 1913, and (speaking from memory) was first performed by the Liverpool Welsh Choral Union.

Quite recently, at a concert of the Hallé Concerts Society in Manchester, on March 10, was given the first complete performance of "The Song of Songs," the first part of which was performed at the Gloucester Musical Festival of 1922. The dates of publication of the five parts of this operatic work on a sacred subject (the words are from the Authorised Version) are: Part 1, 1922; Part 2, 1923; Parts 3, 4 and 5, 1927. It is written for six solo voices, chorus, and orchestra. I have referred to it as an operatic work because it seems to me to call for the co-operation of the senses of sight and hearing, for the action and stage setting, not possible in a concert presentation. It gives us an imaginative picture of the romantic story of the Shulamite, her constancy to her shepherd lover, and rejection of the King's advances. There are motives, or themes, symbolising the characteristics of the chief *dramatis personæ*, in the usual fashion of opera; but, on the other hand, the numbers for chorus practically equal in interest, and importance, those for solo voices—which is not, of course, strictly in accordance with traditional construction. At its performance above-mentioned "The Song of Songs" had a tremendously enthusiastic reception. It is to be hoped, and there is a considerable prospect of the hope being fulfilled, that we shall hear, and see it, as an opera in the near future.

In this necessarily abbreviated account

of the music of Bantock I would at least mention his early orchestral drama, with a prologue, to the "programme" of Browning's "Fifine at the Fair" (1912); his beautiful "Songs of Arcady," for voice and piano to verses by Alfred Hayes; "The Grianan of Aileach," for mixed chorus (unaccompanied), to an ancient Irish legend; "The Pierrot of the Minuet" (suggested by Ernest Dowson's poem), a comedy overture very often heard at concerts; "The Curse of Kehama," two symphonic poems after Southey; "Dante and Beatrice," symphonic poem;

"Helena" Variations on the theme H.F.B. for orchestra; "Hamabdil," Hebrew melody for 'cello and orchestra; "The Sea Rovers," Hebridean Sea Poem, for orchestra; Nine "Sapphic" songs to translations by Bliss Carmen; Hebridean Symphony for orchestra; "The Great God Pan," chorus and orchestra; "Choral Suite" for men's voices (1926). There are, moreover, several pianoforte compositions, and, as already indicated, a very large number of songs, and part-songs, that bear witness to the wonderful prolificacy of the composer.



ON THE FOREST.

THE rounded distance delicately pure,
 The sun-steeped silence exquisitely deep,
 A slim horse passaging among far sheep,
 A solitary horseman on the moor,
 Empurpled heather where the red deer's spoor
 Lies waiting the "great hounds," that hither sweep
 Once in some decade—this my heart shall keep,
 This vision of old things that do endure.

'Tis desolate Exmoor in the Saxon West.
 There lovely Lynton lies, and that green vale
 Where the old Lake Poet spoke of man's last rest,
 Saying, if any of the sons of men
 Should dwell here long, he would in dying hail
 Only the memory of that rivered glen.

VICTOR PLARR.

"THE ENGAGEMENT IS ANNOUNCED . . ."

By MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLIER

"DORA MELCHARD is very anxious I should call on Lady Dovedale. Dora's girl is actually staying at Baycombe Place now, and her mother evidently hopes we will ask her to come to us for a few days."

The Duchess looked up from the letter that she was reading. She valued very much the quiet half-hour which she and the Duke always spent in her own sitting-room together, before they went down to breakfast. Unlike the great majority of her friends, the Duchess did not breakfast in bed. A large shooting-party was being entertained at the Castle just now, so she and the Duke did not see as much of one another as usual.

"Dora Melchard's girl?" he murmured, looking up from his newspaper. "If she's as dull and tiresome and pompous as Lady Melchard has always been, then I advise we don't have her."

The Duchess smiled. "The child's utterly unlike her mother. I'm told she's very showy, as well as tremendously modern and go-ahead."

"If that's true Lady Melchard must feel like an old hen who's hatched out a bird of paradise!"

The Duchess nodded. "Poor Dora was born a generation too late. She belongs by right to the days of our grandmothers. Yet, though I know you won't believe it, she was very attractive, in a demure kind of way. At one time I was dreadfully afraid that my dear father was thinking of marrying her. She would certainly have made an excellent chaperon!"

"She certainly liked 'em old," chuckled the Duke. "Old Toddlekins must have

been about a hundred when she married him."

"By that time she must have been well on in the thirties," said the Duchess thoughtfully. "People thought that marriage a very foolish one, but it turned out quite a success."

"Did you ever see the old chap's wonderful collection of gems, Laura?"

"I never did; but I can remember Papa saying that Lord Melchard had an innocent fancy for precious stones and women—both unpolished. But, seriously, James, what am I to do about the Dovedales?"

"When in doubt abstain," murmured the Duke sententiously.

"Yet I suppose sometimes it's a good thing to have a new man reigning over old acres? All the same, I was terribly grieved when the poor dear Pincotes had to sell that beautiful old house," and then she sighed. "Sir John Dovedale is tremendously rich, you know, James. Perhaps I ought to have called on Lady Dovedale when they first came into the neighbourhood—"

"Now, Laura? Don't make me force you to listen again to my favourite story!"

"Your favourite story, dearest?"

"My favourite drawing-room story."

"I'm quite ready to hear it again, my love. I delight in your stories!"

"My story is that of the man whose wife said to him, 'Do let's go and see them; they're so rich,' to which he replied, 'I would if it was catching—' Now that's how I feel about these Dovedales! If Sir John Dovedale could show me a way by which I can so manage matters that your son Robin won't be ruined when he comes to pay death duties, then I'd willingly

entertain the mammon of unrighteousness."

"I'm told that Lady Dovedale, though she's a nice woman herself, has such dreadful friends—and that their house-parties are so rowdy."

"As they won't expect us to go to their rowdy parties, I don't see that that matters."

"Then it's all right! I mean I may call on Lady Dovedale? Dora Melchard makes a great point of my doing so. She seemed to think it would make a difference to her girl. I'd like to oblige Dora. Though we never meet nowadays, she's a very old friend, after all——"

"And you've certainly something to be grateful for, if she really refused your father," observed the Duke.

And then he saw that he had made a mistake, for the Duchess looked what she hardly ever did look, ruffled.

"I never said that my father had asked Dora to marry him. I'm sure he did no such thing! She would have jumped at him, if he had. I only said that when I was a very young and silly girl I was afraid he was *thinking* of doing so."

Forming part of the shooting-party was a widowed American lady called Mrs. Alexis Todd. The Duchess had come across her in London, and had taken a fancy to Mrs. Todd; also she was vaguely aware that one of her bachelor guests, an ex-ambassador named Lord Amersham, would certainly be pleased if he and this lady were asked at the same time.

Now Mrs. Alexis Todd also always came down to breakfast, and as hostess and guest greeted one another this morning, the Duchess suddenly bethought herself that here was the ideal companion for her forthcoming call on Lady Dovedale. As is so often the case with American women, Mrs. Alexis Todd had the valuable social gift of making herself agreeable to everyone she came across. She never looked or felt bored, neither was she ever what old-fashioned people call *gauche*.

The Duchess had a further reason for wishing this new friend to accompany her this afternoon. She had been somewhat startled, and also in a mild way thrilled, by a confidence which Lord Amersham had made her that evening.

"Duchess?" he had observed suddenly, "I want to tell you how glad I am you have asked that charming lady to stay here,"

and he had inclined his head towards the distant corner where Mrs. Alexis Todd was making herself very pleasant to a shy neighbouring squire who had been asked to dinner. "I'm sure that some gossip has already told you that we are becoming great friends?"

As the Duchess smiled assent, he went on, speaking more seriously, "I fear that during this last season that delightful woman became acquainted with a very queer set of people. She gave some small dances to which she invited the rag-tag and bobtail. She did not ask me to these gatherings, where indeed I should have felt like a ghost, for they were composed, or so I hear, of more young folk than old."

"You do surprise me!" exclaimed the Duchess. Not only was Mrs. Alexis Todd childless, but she was nearer fifty than forty.

"The kind of people among whom she has drifted like her only because of her money, I fear. And also, incidentally, because she took for the season an enormous house, famous for its double ballroom. Now I want you, Duchess, to do me a kindness——"

His hostess answered at once, "Of course I will!" But she felt a little nervous. She was so afraid that he was going to ask her to be a matrimonial envoy! The Duchess did not believe in even autumnal love by proxy—though once or twice she had undertaken something of the kind, and generally with happy results.

"I want you to find out," he said gravely, "if our friend really likes the section of London society into which she has lately drifted? If she does, not only would she be unhappy as my wife, but I most certainly should not be happy as her husband! I can't forget"—he spoke with a certain emotion, "what happened to poor Fraylington. He would be alive to-day if he hadn't married that selfish, silly woman who would drag him about to wherever there was a candle alight! Money may mean more than it ever did," he went on, "but even money can be bought too dear, as I once heard a countryman of our pleasant friend, yonder, express it."

"I do hope," said the Duchess in a low voice, "that you *really* like dear Mrs. Todd? It's very hard on a woman to be married for her money."

"I'm ready to adore her!" he exclaimed in a hurt tone. "She's so kind, so unaffected, so good-humoured, and——"

"And what?" she asked anxiously.

"Her nonsense suits my nonsense," he quoted gaily, and his hostess felt reassured.

"Why, Duchess, this is delightful, and I feel quite honoured."

There was a twinkle in the still bright eyes of the lady who made this half-jesting remark. The motor was gliding along at a good pace, but not too quickly, for the Duchess hated going too fast on a charming

canisms uttered by Mrs. Alexis Todd since her arrival at the Castle. "You don't say!" she exclaimed, in a surprised tone.

"D'you know them?"

"I know old John a little, and young John better than I want to do. He's anything but a bright lad, and in not at all what I should call a nice set."

"What is Sir John Dovedale like?" asked the Duchess.



JUDITH MELCHARD.

country road which led to stately Baycombe Place.

"Tell me something about the people we're going to see. I suppose they are old-fashioned country gentry, such as one reads of in dear Anthony Trollope's novels?"

"Not exactly that," answered the Duchess. "As a matter of fact, I haven't met them yet. Their name is Dovedale—Sir John and Lady Dovedale."

And then out came one of the few Ameri-

She really wanted to know, if only because she knew that the Duke would be compelled, in time, to be "on terms" with the man who, by reason of his vast wealth, was already becoming a great county magnate.

"Sir John," was the cautious answer, "seems all right to me. He's just a big business man of the kind of which there are so many in my country. But—well, I don't think much of the company he keeps! He spends what spare time he has surrounded

by a lot of old *roués*, while his son is being toadied by a lot of young rascals."

"Oh dear!" cried the Duchess, dismayed. "That sounds very bad? They have a big party staying with them now, and in their party is a girl I have not seen since she was a child, and whom I am curious to see, for I've known her mother, Lady Melchard, all my life——"

"You don't mean a girl they call Judith Melchard?" exclaimed Mrs. Alexis Todd in some excitement.

"I do indeed. She must be odd in a way, for her real name is Beatrice, yet she insists on being called Judith!" The Duchess began to laugh, "She said, I believe, that 'Beatrice' was a horrid, old-fashioned name, and that 'Judith' sounded much better——"

"Judith Melchard," said Mrs. Alexis Todd slowly, "will give you a shock, Duchess. I don't suppose you've ever seen anything quite like Judith Melchard."

"Really? What is there so extraordinary about her? I know her mother thinks her far too modern."

The Duchess noted a peculiar look on the other's face.

"Is there any mystery about Judith Melchard? I hope not!" she exclaimed. And she was sincere in what she said, for she had already written to Lady Melchard to say that she was calling on the Dovedales, and would try and arrange that Judith should come on from Baycombe Place to the Castle for a short visit.

"There's no mystery about Judith, and perhaps why I think her so—so peculiar, is that when I first came to England nearly four years ago, I got to know Lady Melchard quite well. Now in those days Judith was still 'Beatrice,' and a girl more well-behaved and *homely*—that's American for plain, you know—you couldn't see. Though she was eighteen she was so quiet and so meek that to watch her was quite a painful sight to a free-born American woman who'd been young once! She never spoke until she was spoken to, scarcely raised her eyes—even when a none-too-young gentleman deigned to take notice of her, in the way mature gentlemen do of a sweet young girl. She'd never been out by herself, at any rate not in London, alone. She still had a Gorgon of a governess, and she was fat, distinctly fat——"

"Dora Melchard couldn't expect her daughter to go on looking like what you describe, Mrs. Todd. I don't wonder the

poor child took the bit between her teeth!"

The Duchess waited a moment. "How well I remember the day that girl was born! She is the exact age of our eldest daughter. Or, rather, my girl is two or three days older than Dora Melchard's girl. The Duke came into my room, laughing, and when I wanted to join in the fun, 'You're not the only proud parent to-day, Laura,' he exclaimed. 'Who d'you think has got a baby, and a girl too, worse luck?' I couldn't guess, so at last he told me, 'Old Melchard—Old Toddlekins has got a daughter,' he said, 'born this morning'——"

"The Duke is a very bright man," said the American lady reflectively, and, the Duchess couldn't help thinking, rather irrelevantly. "The fact that Miss Judith's papa was nicknamed 'Old Toddlekins' perhaps explains something about her which makes her seem different from other girls."

"D'you mean eccentric?" asked the Duchess, puzzled.

"Why no, not eccentric, exactly—— But, maybe, what we at home call 'fresh.' Judith Melchard is certainly a little 'fresh.'"

"She doesn't sound very nice."

"Now that she's cut herself off from her dull home, the girl's just going the pace, as Lord Amersham would say."

"She's very little money to go the pace on," observed the Duchess reflectively, "for Old Toddlekins' money all had to go with the title."

"She may make a little money racing," murmured Mrs. Alexis Todd.

"What an extraordinary change must have come over the girl!" exclaimed the Duchess. "I mean how very different she must be from when you first knew her?"

"Different?" cried Mrs. Alexis Todd in a dramatic tone. "I should say she was different! However, don't go by what I say, Duchess; you just judge her yourself."

But, to the disappointment of both ladies, most of the house-party at Baycombe Place, including their hostess and Miss Melchard, had gone for the day to a race-meeting which was being held in the next county.

That very same evening, however, there came by hand a prettily worded note from Lady Dovedale, asking the Duke and Duchess if they would waive ceremony, and come to dinner at Baycombe Place the following Saturday. Sir John was

starting for South America in ten days, and much desired to discuss with the Duke a matter likely to be of great local interest to them both.

“I think we may as well accept,” said the Duchess eagerly, “I do so want to know what they are really like——”

“Curiosity—thy name is woman!” exclaimed the Duke, thus signifying his assent.

II.

As the Duke and Duchess walked across the great hall of splendid Baycombe Place, each was remembering the last time they had dined here, just before their old friends, Mr. and Mrs. Pincote, had left the house for ever. The Duchess recalled every moment of that tragic last visit—how an ancient servitor about to be pensioned had opened the front door, and then silently led them through the ill-lighted vestibule, into the high dark hall over which there then brooded an air of tragedy.

Now the whole house was brilliantly, almost garishly, lighted, and the hall looked like a stage scene, even the splendid armoured men-at-arms standing in each corner appearing unnaturally spick and span.

“I’m afraid, your Grace, that her ladyship is not down yet,” said the stately butler suavely. “Dinner is at a quarter to nine.”

The Duke looked at the Duchess, but her conscience was quite clear. “Lady Dove-dale mentioned half-past eight in her note,” she said quietly.

“Her ladyship do say that as a rule, your Grace, because Sir John likes dinner to be very punctual.”

As he spoke he opened the door of what had been called, in the Pincotes’ day, the cedar drawing-room. There remained nothing, now, to remind either of Lady Dove-dale’s guests of the apartment where gentle Mrs. Pincote had been wont to receive her friends and neighbours. For many years before the final crash everything of value in Baycombe Place had made its way, quietly, unobtrusively, to Christie’s; but now it was as if the wealth of the Indies, so the Duchess told herself, had been poured into the beautifully shaped old apartment. The walls were hung with turquoise blue silk; over the mantelpiece was a famous picture of a group of three lovely sisters by Reynolds; and a pair of superb tapestry panels hung each side of a door which led into the dining-room. As to the furniture, each cabinet, each couch, even each occasional chair, was what is termed “a museum

piece.” So much could the visitors see, though the lights had not yet all been turned up.

“What a wonderful room,” murmured the Duchess, “and what beautiful things, James!”

“I call it——” then he stopped, for words failed him with which to express his dislike of the almost oppressive splendour about them. Then, all at once—“Laura? Do look at that!” he exclaimed, under his breath.

The Duchess followed the direction of his eyes, and gradually she saw that, far away, in the farthest corner of the great drawing-room, and illumined by a reading-lamp, stood, half in shadow, a peculiar-looking figure. For a moment she wondered whether that curiously dead-white, oval face, vividly detached against a dark silk curtain, was that of a boy or a girl. But the doubt lasted only for a moment, for as the figure, slight to attenuation, moved a little forward, she saw that it was certainly that of a young woman, not that of a young man.

Above the dead-white face, in which the eyes looked like dark fathomless pools, the short-clipped red-gold hair was brushed straight back, the latest type, though the Duchess had not yet heard the expression, of what was beginning to be known as “the Eton crop.” The black satin dress was made so close up to the neck as to produce a ghastly effect—that of the wearer’s head having been cut off. Both long thin arms were bare to the shoulder; but on the left arm gleamed two dozen or more brilliant paste bracelets.

Suddenly the right hand shot up, and in one of the dark eyes was cocked an eyeglass. And then the same hand sought, as if blindly, for a crystal box on the table where stood the reading-lamp, and, extracting a cigarette twice the usual length, lit it, and pushed it between the scarlet lips.

“James! I do believe that’s Dora’s girl.”

As the Duchess whispered the words in a tone of horror, the door behind her opened, and two ladies walked into the room.

Under cover of their entrance, the Duke answered, “Dora’s girl? You mean Dora’s monster!”

The ladies who had just come in took no notice of the three people who were already in the room; instead they went on talking unconcernedly to one another. According to the Duchess’s old-fashioned notions, both of them had very bad manners.

Going swiftly across the room, "I think you must be Judith Melchard, my dear?" she exclaimed.

The girl started; she jerked the eyeglass out of her eye, and answered at once, in a soft, rather affected, voice, which was so like her mother's that the

Duchess felt startled, "I'm so glad to

"And then the same hand sought, as if blindly, for a crystal box on the table where stood the reading-lamp."

see you, Duchess! I got your kind message. It's most awfully kind of you to ask me to stay with you——"

And, as the Duke had now approached, "I feel as if I know you, for Mummy used to talk of you so often!"

She was still addressing the Duchess, while gazing at the stony face of the Duke.

"James? This is Judith Melchard. She's coming to stay with us for a few days."

"We shall be very pleased to see you," he said coldly. "But I'm afraid you'll find us very quiet people, Miss Melchard."

"I'm longing to be quiet," murmured the girl. And then she said disdainfully, "Isn't this room *awful*?"

"Awful? Why, my dear, I think it's one of the most beautiful rooms I have ever seen!"

"It stinks of money. This little table alone cost thirteen hundred pounds, and in a sale-room, too, so that it's real value. The Dovedales always exact full value for everything they spend."

The Duchess felt a movement of recoil. What a cruel, ungrateful way to speak of the people in whose house one was being



entertained! After all, this extraordinary-

looking girl was not obliged to stay with the Dovedales.

But as these thoughts were flitting through her mind, she saw a lady who was obviously the hostess hurry into the room, accompanied by her husband. And perhaps just because of the girl's passionate tone of disdain the Duchess glanced at the couple with more care than she would otherwise have bestowed on them.

Sir John Dovedale looked what he was—a hard, intelligent man of business, who had built up a vast fortune by his own individual efforts, and who was proud of it. The only disagreeable thing about him was his air of slightly supercilious satisfaction. Lady Dovedale was a nervous,



"James! I do believe that's Dora's girl."

delicate-looking woman, and wearing, to-night, a dress of almost absurd magnificence. What is called in France a "robe de style," it was of pale oyster-tinted satin, trimmed with gorgeous hand embroidery embossed with pearls.

Little by little, evidently in no hurry to be punctual, the rest of the party drifted in, the Duchess recognising among her fellow-guests only two local worthies.

At last, some ten minutes after a superb Chippendale clock had chimed a quarter to nine, the two high doors which led into the dining-room were flung open, and Sir John gave his arm to the Duchess.

She found the dining-room of the grand old house comparatively little changed, though it appeared, naturally, very different from what it had looked when she had last dined here.

After everyone had sat down, and as two huge wooden bowls filled to the brim with caviare were being handed round, the Duchess began to take note of the people round her.

On the other side of her host was a squire's wife with whom she was already well acquainted. To her own left sat a middle-aged man of florid complexion and dissipated appearance, and she felt a little surprised when Sir John introduced him as "my brother Ralph." Beyond Mr. Ralph Dovedale sat Judith Melchard. And more and more, as the dinner progressed, was the Duchess absorbed in the problem presented by her old friend's daughter.

The girl did not look at all happy to-night. She only toyed with her food, but that no doubt was owing to a fear of losing her slim, boy-like, figure. As to her face, it was powdered so thickly as to give her a mask-like, scarcely human, look.

Staring straight before her she took no apparent notice of either of the men between whom she was placed.

Small wonder that the young man who was on Judith Melchard's farther side devoted himself unaffectedly to the pretty vivacious young married woman next him. Mr. Ralph Dovedale, on the other hand, tried again and again to make the girl talk to him. The Duchess noticed that twice Judith pretended not to hear him, but the third time she turned on him and muttered something in a low, angry tone, while she ostentatiously moved her chair a few inches farther away from his.

At last the Duchess turned to her host's

brother. She thought it high time Sir John addressed the lady on his left, and he did so at last, though not over-willingly. Mr. Ralph Dovedale was short almost to rudeness to his brother's guest, and for a while she put his curious abrupt way of answering her remarks down to shyness. Gradually, however, she became uncomfortably convinced that there must be some reason for his lack of courtesy. Was he annoyed that so long a time had elapsed before she had called on his sister-in-law? If yes, that would surely be carrying family susceptibility very far? But whatever the reason, there could be no doubt about the fact, and the Duchess, who had never before been treated with such lack of courtesy, felt a sensation of real relief when she at last caught Lady Dovedale's eye.

A few moments later the ladies were once more scattered over the great drawing-room, though soon four or five of the younger women formed themselves into a group, and began to discuss something in low, eager tones. And at last one of them came up to Lady Dovedale.

"Are we going to play 'Chemmy' to-night?" she asked.

And as her hostess, remaining silent, looked nervous, and undecided, she turned with a pretty, little coaxing air, to the Duchess, "Don't you think 'Chemmy's' great fun?" she asked. "I'm sure you play?"

"To tell you the truth, I don't even know what 'Chemmy' is!"

"Surely you've seen 'Chemin de Fer' played?"

The Duchess shook her head. "I'm hopelessly old-fashioned! But I should like to see 'Chemmy' played——"

And then Lady Dovedale intervened, "My husband doesn't care for billiards, so we've made what was the billiard-room into a bridge-room, and a general indoor games room. Do you play bridge, Duchess?" she asked.

"I'm sure you'll much prefer 'Chemmy'!" broke in the younger lady positively. "It's absolutely fascinating! I'd rather play to lose, than not play at all!"

"I don't agree as to that," said Lady Dovedale languidly, "I hate losing, especially as it makes my husband cross."

"Sir John disapproves of the sins he's not inclined to," cried her guest gaily.

"I should hate losing more than I could afford," observed the Duchess.

"Very well. We'll play for low stakes to-night."

The speaker turned round. “Who’s for ‘Chemmy’?” she called out. Then, “You’ll play, of course, Judith?”

Judith Melchard had been standing by, silent. She started, “What is it you want me to do?” she asked.

“We want you to play ‘Chemmy’!”

“I don’t think I’ll play to-night.”

“Nonsense, Judith! I know you lost a packet yesterday. But you look to-night as if your luck was in.”

“My luck’s out,” said Judith Melchard, and her soft voice had so bitter and hopeless an inflection that the Duchess felt disturbed.

While they were all going along the broad corridor which led to the billiard-room, she put her hand on the girl’s arm. “How long are you staying here?” she asked in a low voice. “We can have you at any time.”

“I’d like to come at once—to-morrow! But I’m booked to stay here till the end of next week, worse luck. I’ve promised I would, and I can’t break my word.”

She stayed her steps while all the others swept on, and the Duchess, perforce, did so too; and then Judith Melchard went on speaking, in an urgent, feverish tone, “I’ve thought of something! If you’ll tell Lady Dovedale that you can only have me from the day after to-morrow, Duchess, as after that you’ll be full up, then I think I could get away from here at once. But you must make her really believe that you do want me to come, otherwise——”

“Otherwise what?”

“—otherwise they’ll be offended that I want to leave them.”

Judith spoke in a preoccupied, peculiar tone.

Was it possible, the Duchess asked herself in dismay, that the girl was thinking of marrying young Dovedale? The dull-looking youth had been introduced to her by his fond mother just before dinner, and she hadn’t liked the look of him at all.

She asked in a low voice, “Are you really intimate with the Dovedales, my dear? Your mother wrote as if you were a great deal with them.”

“I’m not much more with them than I am with a great many other people,” she answered, in an embarrassed tone. “But Lady Dovedale seems to like having me about with them, and they’ve a wonderful house in London. After all, next to being rich oneself, I suppose the best thing is to be with rich people?”

The Duchess did not know what to say

to a remark which struck her as not only untrue, but vulgar.

It took the Duchess perhaps as long as ten minutes to understand the intricacies of “Chemin de Fer.” Placed in a seat by the lady who was acting as banker, she was in a position to see everything happening on the green cloth. But she refused to play herself. The maximum single stake—the Duchess could not help suspecting it had never before been so low in this house—was five shillings. Even so, what must have been a considerable amount of money soon began changing hands. Judith Melchard, who played with care, and the amount of judgment possible with regard to the game, won steadily, and in front of her soon rose a heap of ivory chips, each of which represented five shillings. But she showed none of the joy and excitement that those round her betrayed when they had won, and, after a while, she stopped playing.

But she did not get up from the table as one or two of the others had done after they had been, as they gaily declared, “cleaned out.” She went on watching the game with absorbed interest.

A bold, even a reckless, player, always taking, when it came her way, even a dangerous chance, was Lady Dovedale. It was plain that the game fascinated and took out of herself the delicate, anxious-looking woman. She looked a different being when it came to her turn to take a card out of what, to everyone’s amusement, the Duchess called “that funny-looking little slipper.”

When the men joined the ladies the Duchess’s host came and stood behind her. “A gamble has absolutely no attraction for me,” he observed. “In fact it bores me. I can’t understand how anybody can waste his time in this sort of way. Now and again I take part in a game of bridge. But I don’t play well, and I hate doing anything I don’t do well! If I had my way I’d forbid any gambling game to be played in my house.”

To that the Duchess felt she could make no answer, but she was not really surprised when he went on, speaking in so low a tone that only she could hear what it was he said:

“My wife took to what they call ‘Chemmy’ two years ago, at Cannes, and I soon made up my mind that I would rather she played in *my* house, than elsewhere.”

At last, loth though she felt to disturb Lady Dovedale, the Duchess got up. It was just after midnight, and Lady Dovedale had won largely, for a huge heap of ivory chips lay before her. Yet she rose reluctantly from her chair.

"I should be so grateful if you could spare Judith Melchard to us the day after to-morrow," said the Duchess. "I'll send over for her——"

She paused, expecting a protest, but the other, far from being annoyed, looked positively relieved. "Pray don't trouble to send for her; someone will only be too delighted to motor her over," and then beckoning to Judith she said in a cold voice, "The Duchess would like you to go and stay with her for a few days on Monday. Ralph will motor you over. I suppose you'll come back here afterwards, Judith?"

"I suppose I shall," said the girl in a sullen voice, and as she turned away a man's voice exclaimed in a low, excited, angry tone, "You promised to stay the whole of this week, Judith! You're not going to chuck now?"

The Duchess looked round quickly, to see with astonishment that it was Ralph Dovedale, now standing close to Judith Melchard, who had uttered that rough reproach.

"Perhaps you could have me a little later on, Duchess?" said the girl irresolutely.

"I'm sorry to say I can't, my dear. The Duke and I are going for a round of visits——"

"Of course you must go on Monday, Judith," and Lady Dovedale spoke with far more decision than the Duchess had heard her speak yet.

As soon as the motor started the Duke exclaimed, "I little thought I'd ever catch you in a gambling-den!"

"You didn't catch me playing—though I don't see why one shouldn't gamble, if one only risks as much as one can afford——"

"Don't you? Now be honest, Laura! If you had been watching some of the women there as closely as I watched them you'd have seen why gambling has been called 'the child of avarice and the parent of despair.'"

"I think you're very narrow-minded, James. Not one of those foolish, well-to-do women there to-night looked in the least like 'a child of avarice.'"

"Would you be surprised to hear that Lady Dovedale was among the poor wretches who were raided in a West End gambling house last May? So, at any rate, one of the cads she is now so kindly entertaining went out of his way to tell me—and I've no doubt it's true."

III.

JUDITH MELCHARD had now been at the Castle three days; and, to the Duchess's pleasure and amusement, and to the Duke's disgust, she was proving a great success. None of her fellow-guests, with the exception of Mrs. Alexis Todd, had ever seen anything quite like her—at any rate at close quarters, and that in spite of the fact that some of them were acquainted with Judith's mother.

The one comparatively young man of the party, a rising politician named Mark Frett, who was still on the sunny side of forty, became at once obviously attracted. They were constantly together, talking, walking, motoring even, in the car he drove himself. Soon he confided to the Duchess that, though Miss Melchard had a peculiar appearance, she was certainly a very clever, original, and intelligent girl.

In spite of this unexpected, and to the Duchess agreeable, development, Judith, unless she was talking animatedly, looked far from happy—indeed she sometimes had a despairing look on the face which, in answer to a gentle hint, now proved a little less mask-like, though she was still far more "made-up" than any other girl with whom her hostess was acquainted.

That something lay heavily on her mind was obvious; could it be, the Duchess asked herself, an unhappy love-affair?

And then something happened which suddenly cleared up what had become, to one kind heart, a disturbing mystery.

On the fourth morning of Judith Melchard's visit, as the Duchess came into her own sitting-room, the Duke jumped up from the chair on which he had been sitting reading *The Times*, and exclaimed:

"I suppose, Laura, that you knew all about *this*? Or, will it, I wonder, strike you as it did me, as something of a surprise?" And he waved a sheet of the paper towards her.

"What d'you mean, James?"

"Come now? I'm sure you've been behind the scenes with regard to an engagement announced in to-day's *Times*?"

"Don't tease me. Who *is* the girl?"

"The girl? You can't think of any *man* you've met lately?"

"Man? Oh dear, I do hope it's not Mark Frett. You mayn't have noticed it, my dear; but he seems to have taken such a fancy to Judith Melchard. It's a real 'smite,' if ever there was one——"

"Noticed it? Of course I have. And I confess I thought she liked him too."

"Did you? I'm so glad!"

"Don't be glad——"

"Then it *is* Mark Frett?" and the Duchess looked very much discomfited.

"It's not Frett—it's another of your guests who's engaged."

"One of my guests?"

The Duchess felt quite sure she knew who the happy man was—Lord Amersham, of course.

She sprang up into the air, and caught the paper from him. Eagerly she turned to the *Marriage Announcements*. And then a look of horror spread over her face, for this is what she read:

"The engagement is announced, and a marriage will shortly take place between Mr. Ralph Dovedale, and the Honble. Beatrice (Judith) Melchard, only child of the thirteenth Baron Melchard, and of the Dowager Lady Melchard, of The Old House, Market Retford."

She flung the offending sheet on the floor. "I don't believe it," she cried in agitated tones.

"You don't believe it? My poor dear child, why, there it is, in black and white!"

"We'll send for her at once," said the Duchess in a decided tone, and she rang the bell.

The Duke said quietly, "Be careful, my dear. Don't say something you may be sorry for afterwards——"

She came close up to him, "You're right, James. I will be careful, but—but, but it's so horrible!"

"I agree. With the one exception of the loathly cad who told me about Lady Dovedale being caught in that gambling raid, I thought Sir John's brother the most offensive of the many offensive people we met the other night. But the girl evidently likes those——"

The Duchess's maid appeared, "Will you please ask Miss Melchard to come to me in my sitting-room? I wish to see her before I go down to breakfast."

A very few moments later Judith Melchard, in a dressing-gown, came into the room. The Duke thought she looked nicer than usual, for she had not made up her

face. But she looked uncomfortable when she saw him, for she did not share her host's views as to powder and lipstick, and she told herself that she must be "looking awful."

The Duchess took the girl's hand in hers, "We've both been very much surprised," she spoke slowly, carefully, choosing her words, "to see your engagement announced in to-day's *Times*, Judith."

"My engagement?" cried Judith Melchard, and then she gave a sudden hysterical laugh. "Then *that* was what he meant!"

"I wish you had told me that you were engaged—or about to be engaged—to Mr. Ralph Dovedale. I gather your mother knew nothing of it?"

"I didn't consider myself engaged to Mr. Ralph Dovedale," exclaimed Judith defiantly. "He's wanted to marry me for a long time, and I've always refused him——"

The Duke observed coldly, "Then how is it that your engagement is formally announced in *The Times* 'Marriage Announcements'? If I remember rightly, both parties have to send their consent in writing before a notice is inserted. Is that not so, Laura? I seem to remember something of the kind in connection with the announcement of Lettice's engagement."

"If that's true," said Judith Melchard excitedly, "then Ralph Dovedale forged my signature! He's quite capable of doing that—in fact it's the sort of thing he *would* do."

The Duchess saw that the Duke did not believe what the girl had just said, but she was inclined to think that Judith had spoken the truth.

All at once the girl burst into a passion of angry sobs. "What shall I do?" she cried woefully. "Oh, Duchess, what *shall* I do?"

The Duke got up, and unobtrusively he left the room.

The Duchess looked fixedly at Judith Melchard. "You're sure, quite sure, that you had no knowledge of *this*?"

And she forced the weeping girl to look at the column headed "Forthcoming Marriages."

"I swear solemnly before God that I knew nothing of this——"

"You needn't do that. I believe you."

The Duchess had already made up her mind that this marriage must not be allowed to take place. "Now tell me," she said quietly, "all about it, Judith. How did you first become"—she did not like to

use the word "entangled," so she substituted the word "friends,"—"with Mr. Ralph Dovedale?"

"We're not friends. I hate him! But I'm in his debt—that's all."

"In his debt?" echoed the Duchess.

"I owe him more money than I can ever pay," said the girl sullenly. Then again she exclaimed, "I hate him! He knows that, but he's determined to marry me."

"Surely your mother would pay anything to prevent your marrying a man you hate?"

"Mother could never pay what I owe him. She hasn't enough ready money."

"My dear!" The Duchess smiled. "That really must be nonsense."

"It isn't nonsense. I owe Ralph Dovedale over three thousand pounds."

"Three thousand pounds!" exclaimed the Duchess.

She stared at the girl with horrified eyes. "What *has* the money been spent on?"

"Can't you guess, Duchess?" And then Judith Melchard uttered the one word "Chemmy."

"That gambling game they were all playing the other night?"

"Of course. Lady Dovedale taught me how to play. I've been with her again and again to what some people call, I believe, gambling dens. But there are a lot of 'straight' houses—I mean where the game is fair, where there's no cheating. I shall never forget the first day I lost heavily at 'Chemmy'—"

She laughed, an eerie laugh. "I lost seventy pounds, and I felt as if the world had come to an end! But Lady Dovedale gave me the money. Then the next time I lost four hundred odd pounds in one sitting. I suppose Lady Dovedale told Ralph; I didn't—and he forced a thousand pounds in notes on me. I was awfully grateful. But I didn't really know him then."

"I suppose," said the Duchess slowly, "that he's madly in love with you."

"I suppose so," said Judith, and then closing her eyes, she shivered. "He says I've reformed him. You've only got to look at him to see that I haven't done that! I don't suppose he'd *want* to marry me if I was—well—say Miss Jones? But he feels he's bought the right to marry a peer's daughter—that's actually how he put it to me once. He hated my coming to stay with you. I suppose he thought that I might tell you the trouble I was in.

But I never should have done, but for *this*."

"Why not, my dear?"

"Where would have been the use?" asked the girl hopelessly. "I'm 'for it,' as people say. Mother allows me five pounds a week, which she thinks a tremendous lot—poor darling! And when she dies I believe I'm to have seven hundred a year. Mother once had about eight thousand pounds, but some idiot persuaded her to sink six thousand pounds of it in an annuity, just before her marriage to father! She'll be overjoyed that I'm going to be married to Ralph Dovedale, if only because he's a rich man."

She added mournfully, "He hates gambling, so after I'm married I shan't have even *that* to fall back on."

"I'll think over what is to be done; it's quite clear to me that you can't marry a man about whom you feel as you say you do," said the Duchess firmly.

"If I'd the pluck I'd shoot myself," said Judith sombrely.

At breakfast the Duchess noticed that Mark Frett looked serious, and quite unlike his usual cheerful self. When she got up from the table, he followed her out of the dining-room. "I had no idea," he said a little awkwardly, "that Miss Melchard was engaged to be married."

And then the woman he addressed took what she called to herself "a chance."

"The marriage announced in to-day's *Times*," she said quietly, "is not going to take place. Mr. Ralph Dovedale, unknown to Miss Melchard, inserted that notice. She's terribly upset about it, poor child. Of course he's madly in love with her—"

"But what an unscrupulous thing to do!"

The Duchess, who had known Mark Frett since he was a boy, threw him a curious look. "When you're as old as I am you'll realise that people do do very queer things—sometimes, especially if they're what they call 'in love.' Mr. Ralph Dovedale has used this abominable means to rush, as he thinks, poor Judith Melchard into an engagement. But he made a great mistake. She's furiously angry with him, and no wonder!"

"I first met Miss Melchard last year," he said, in a rather shamefaced voice. "We were in the same Newmarket party. I was so glad to meet her again, here."

To that observation the Duchess made no answer. She only told herself that the

ways of modern young men and maidens were incalculable.

Avoiding the Duke, she went up to the unhappy girl's bedroom, and as she came into the room Judith held out a piece of paper.

"Look at what mother has wired! I knew she would be delighted." There was a bitter, sarcastic tone in her voice.

"Announcement in to-day's *Times* took me a little by surprise. But please congratulate your fiancé. Suggest I meet you both to-morrow in town, Half Moon Street.

"LOVING MOTHER."

"Then your mother knows Mr. Dovedale?"

"Indeed she doesn't! She's never even seen him. But you know what she's like? She'd be horrified if her servants, or anyone in the village where she lives, guessed the truth."

"I've come to tell you what I've made up my mind to do."

The girl leant back wearily on her pillow. She thought the Duchess was going to tell her that she meant either to send for Ralph Dovedale, or to motor over to Baycombe Place, and make an appeal to what old-fashioned people would call his better feelings. Well Judith Melchard knew that any appeal of the kind would be useless.

But what was it the Duchess was saying?

"I'm going to lend you the money to pay this man off. I can't afford to give you the money—there was a time when I could have done so. But I can't do so now. You will have to enter into an undertaking to pay the sum back. The bulk of it after your mother's death, the rest in small instalments—either to me, or, more probably, to my heirs."

"D'you really mean you are going to do that for me?"

The girl spoke in a voice of dazed gratitude.

"Yes, I do mean it. I feel I know you well enough to know that you will pay this money back when, and how, you can."

"I will indeed!"

"And there's another thing, Judith. I want you to give me your word of honour that you will never again play for money."

The girl held out her hand. "I give you my word of honour, I never will," she said solemnly.

"Unfortunately we shall have to wait a day or two. I mean till the money's transferred to your account."

"Must we do that? I don't mind Ralph Dovedale knowing how good you are being to me."

"If you feel like that I'll go into the town this morning and see the manager of the bank where I keep my local account. Of course there's nothing like three thousand pounds in it now." The Duchess waited a moment. "But he is always very kind to me," she said simply.

"I should think everybody is always very kind to you," the girl said gratefully.

"While I'm gone, do write Mr. Dovedale a short note. Say you've made up your mind not to marry him, and that you're enclosing a cheque in full for the money you owe him."

"May I stay up here?" asked Judith nervously. "It would be so dreadful if I went downstairs, and they all began to congratulate me. I suppose they all know?"

"I suppose they do, by now. But only one person has spoken to me of the matter—that was Mark Frett."

"What did he say?"

"I thought it best, my dear, to tell him the truth—that Mr. Dovedale had chosen this curious way of rushing you into an engagement. I also told him quite frankly that I did not consider such a marriage would be to your happiness, and that I hoped it would not take place."

"I wonder what he thinks of it all." Judith Melchard spoke in a reflective tone. "He must be a good bit shocked, for he's what I should call a conventional young man."

"He's a very excellent young man, my dear. And I think he felt a good deal upset about all this. By the way, I was surprised to hear that he'd met you before, some time last year."

"We made great friends then," the girl stressed the "then." "But I made up my mind I wouldn't see him again."

"I think you made a mistake there. He's very clever, and has a future before him."

Judith said bitterly, "Then he deserves a clever wife who'll help him—not one the likes of me."

"You're quite clever enough already, Judith," the Duchess looked straight at the girl, "and I don't see why you shouldn't pull yourself together, and become a really nice young woman—"

There came a knock at the bedroom door, and a housemaid brought in a large envelope

which evidently contained some kind of little box or case.

"This has just come over from Baycombe Place. Is there an answer, miss?"

Judith tore open the envelope. Then she handed the letter it contained, in silence, to the Duchess.

"Give a glance at to-day's *Times*. You'll find there something of interest to you. I've been and gone and done it this time! Try to forgive

"Your devoted
"RALPH."

There was a postscript.

"P.S.—I got the enclosed last week. It's been burning my pocket ever since. I hope you'll like it."

Judith Melchard took the square jewel-case out of the envelope, and opened it. It contained a platinum ring, set with a large boat-shaped diamond.

"I think you'd better let me just write a line to Mr. Dovedale explaining that you're not well, but that you're writing to him, and that he will hear from you this afternoon. May I do this?"

The girl gave her a grateful look, and the Duchess went to the writing-table. There, without sitting down, she scribbled on a piece of notepaper:

"*Thursday morning.*

"DEAR MR. DOVEDALE,—

"Miss Melchard is not well. She has asked me to tell you she is writing to you, and will send her note by hand after lunch.

"Yours truly,

"LAURA ST. ANDREWS."

When the Duchess came in just before lunch she was surprised to hear that Miss Melchard had got down, and gone out for a walk. She felt relieved when the girl, at long last, came in, looking quite different from what the Duchess had ever seen her—happy, cheerful, in a word, normal.

"I've been into the town, to the Post Office," she exclaimed. "I wanted to send off a telegram to mother telling her that I'm not engaged—that it was all a mistake!"

The Duchess murmured, "I've got the cheque, and I think we'd better send the Duke's valet over with the letter, for that diamond ring must be of very great value."

"I suppose it is," said Judith indiffer-

ently. "He'd better keep it for the next girl he gets into his toils."

Then, impulsively, she kissed the Duchess. "Now I'm going up to bed again. You'll tell them all, won't you, that it was a mistake—there never was any engagement?"

"Certainly I will."

The Duke had to go up to town that day, so the Duchess came down to breakfast just a little earlier than usual the next morning.

Was it her fancy, or was it a fact, that Mark Frett was hovering about waiting for her? Also, did she only suppose, or was it true that he looked very much happier than he had done this time yesterday?

"I suppose you've seen to-day's papers?" he observed.

"No, I haven't yet——"

"Look down there," he exclaimed, "quite at the end, Duchess?"

And there below the Marriage Announcements was a laconic little paragraph:

"The marriage announced yesterday as about to take place between Mr. Ralph Dovedale and the Hon. Judith Melchard will not take place."

"I'm glad to see he had the decency to contradict it at once," she exclaimed. "I must run up and tell Judith. She'll be so relieved!" And she threw a bright smile at the young man.

She was surprised to find a copy of *The Times* lying on the girl's bed, for Judith had gruffly declared, the day she arrived, that she never read the papers.

"Well, my dear, I hope you feel a little more kindly now than you did yesterday towards Mr. Dovedale!"

"Why should I, Duchess?"

"Because of *this*, and the speaker opened wide *The Times*."

Judith laughed merrily. "I put that in! After sending the wire to mother, I asked if the Post Office could send a boy messenger all the way to London, and they said yes, they *could* do so, though no one had ever asked them to do it before. So I wrote out that announcement, and with it I wrote a nice little note imploring them to put it in *at once*."

The Duchess felt puzzled. "I thought the signatures of the man, as well as of the girl, had to be supplied," she observed.

"Ralph Dovedale had forged my signature, so I forged his," Judith said calmly. "I luckily had a bit of Baycombe Place notepaper with me——"

For once the Duchess was at a loss for words. While she, in a sense, sympathised, she was very much shocked.

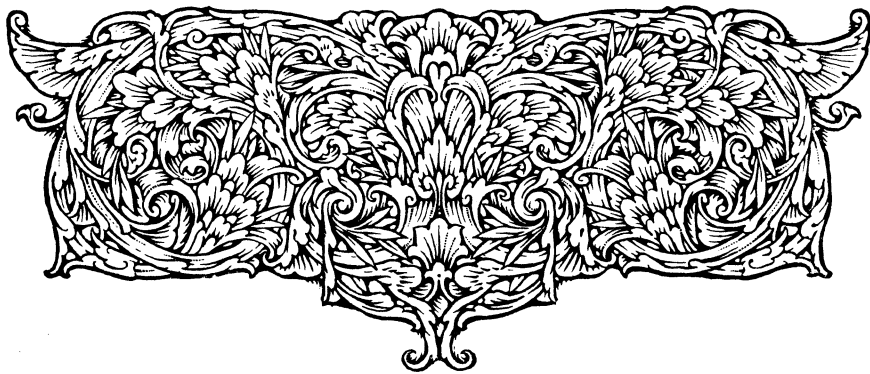
She gazed with distress at the young forger. "Never let anyone know, dear child, that you did such a thing."

Judith looked surprised and a little amused.

"Above all," went on the Duchess, "never let your husband, if you ever do marry, know of what you did yesterday. I

don't think any man would like to think his wife could ever have forged anyone else's name, even in fun."

"It wasn't in fun," said Judith Melchard slowly. "And, Duchess, I—I hope you won't think it was very odd of me to do such a thing, but when I was coming back from the town, yesterday morning, I met Mark Frett. We went a little walk together, and he was so kind, so understanding, that I told him—*everything*."



EXIT.

THE evening scattered its rose-in-bloom,
With petals flying,
To a woman shut in an upper room,
Eagerly dying. . . .

Sins and sorrows were dust in the wind,
Fears were surmounted,—
Things once precious were left behind,
Nothing accounted.

Up the bleak hill-side where she had trod,
Stumbling and climbing,
She heard in the distance the bells of God,
Victory-chiming.

Her soul was done with its fleshly veil,
Its snare and prison,—
It yearned for life that has scope and scale,
Heights yet unrisen,—

And straining away from the bonds and bands,
Earthborn, that bound it,
It leaped to freedom! And God's own hands
Closed fast around it.

MAY BYRON.

MY LADY'S CHAMBER

By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "Berry & Co.," "Jonah & Co.," "The Stolen March," "And Five Were Foolish," "Blind Corner," "Valerie French," Etc., Etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

PATRICK DANVERS, bachelor, saw no good reason why he should ever abandon this excellent state. His life was sheltered. His leisure was not embarrassed by lack of means: his work was savoury meat, such as he loved. Danvers was a herald. He respected his office and delighted in his work at the College of Arms. In an age when traditions were dying of violence and neglect, he found himself happy in maintaining the fairest of them all. For this his profession he had his father to thank. From his mother he had inherited a little house in Westminster and a fortune which was sufficient, because he was content to live quietly and to be outrun by the times. He went out little, except to dine at his Club. For a man of thirty years, he had few friends: for a tall, good-looking, young man, who dealt with Savile Row and knew how to wear his clothes, his feminine acquaintance was almost unbelievably slight. Attempts to correct this disorder always failed: Danvers was nothing if not resolute.

As is the way of a man, Danvers seldom visited the great stores. He had no prejudice against them, but he liked the 'specialist' shops. If he had need of a pen-knife, he went to a cutler's, as his father had done. One February day, however, a chance commendation took him to one of those temples of trade from which no reasonable suppliant need ever go empty away.

To say that the place was full conveys nothing at all: it was containing about three times as many customers as it could conveniently hold: these blocked the aisles and were excluded from the lifts: some of them fought their way; the efficiency of

the assistants alone prevented a riot. Climbing a magnificent staircase, Danvers wondered how the 'Christmas rush' had passed without a death-roll.

He had found the dispatch-case he wanted and was upon the point of leaving the counter, when he noticed another customer sitting some three yards away. This was a woman.

Now Danvers, more monk than gallant, would never have noticed the lady, had he not seen a hand leave the cuff of her squirrel-fur coat.

The hand was that of a woman, but not that of the owner of the coat; the latter, indeed, was plainly unaware of the attention and continued to choose a dog's lead with all her might.

Danvers knitted his brows.

The hand was gone, and he had no means of judging to whom it belonged. The press was too thick. He began to wonder whether he had witnessed a theft . . . whether he should acquaint the lady with what he had observed . . . whether . . .

Here he looked round, to see whether anyone else had noticed the fugitive hand.

That somebody else had done so was immediately clear.

Another woman, wearing a squirrel-fur coat, was staring at her slight counterpart, with her underlip caught in her teeth. Finding Danvers' eyes upon her, she turned and moved swiftly away.

Danvers began to feel bewildered.

Here a smooth voice at his elbow inquired if he was being attended to, and Danvers joined the column which was seething along the aisle.

He made his way downstairs in some un-

easiness. Something was wrong. Of that he had no doubt at all. The hand he had seen had not been especially clean: he had not liked the look upon his fellow-witness's face: the lady of the dog-leads had been so wholly unconscious of any ill. He remembered that her face had been eager and very young, that she had been wearing a pert, little yellow hat.

A block on the staircase delayed him. Someone had fallen down and was being assisted to a seat. Her friends were abusing the slippery state of the stairs. These were not slippery at all, but were saving more souls than they could conveniently serve.

Danvers reached the jaws of an entrance with a sigh of relief.

To his surprise, he saw the lady of the dog-leads two paces ahead. She had, no doubt, descended by one of the lifts and now, like Danvers, was about to be gone.

As she stepped out of the doorway, a man touched her upon the sleeve. Danvers heard him say something about 'the Management.'

"Me?" said the girl quickly. "Why?"

Her voice was clear and refreshing.

"This way, if you please," said the man, laying a hand on her arm.

"But I——"

"This way, please," said the man.

People were beginning to stare.

Then—

"Shop-lifting," whispered someone—and the scales fell from Danvers' eyes.

Her cheeks flaming, the girl turned to obey.

Danvers followed her and her escort into the store.

Almost at once they passed through a private door. Danvers followed. . . .

"Excuse me, sir," said a voice.

"I saw what happened," said Danvers, producing a card. "Before you accuse this lady, you may like to let me speak."

Four people stared at him. Of these the girl stared wildly, with the big, wide eyes of a child.

"Five minutes ago," said Danvers, "this lady was choosing a lead. By her side was a woman, wearing a similar coat. Mark that. Exactly similar. I saw a hand place something in this lady's cuff. The woman saw it too, and looked extremely annoyed. When she saw me looking at her, she instantly faded away. It's perfectly plain that the goods were intended for her."

The girl was feeling in her cuff—frantically.

"The other one," said Danvers.

She turned this back, and a pair of black silk socks fell to the floor.

"For heaven's sake!" said the girl.

"Can you describe this woman?" said a heavily built fellow, clad in a dark blue suit.

"Her features were sharp," said Danvers. "And she was heavily rouged. Her right eyelid seemed to droop."

"That's right," said the other. "*Alias* Madge Perowne." He turned to the third man, who was wearing a manager's dress and nervously fingering his chin. "Mistake," he said shortly. "It's a mercy this gentleman was there."

The manager cleared his throat.

Then he bowed to the girl.

"I can only offer you, madam, a most humble apology. I beg that you will believe that we have a very difficult task. The thefts are so very many and so very skilfully done that——"

"I don't think it was anyone's fault," said the girl shakily.

The man was visibly relieved.

"Thank you very much indeed, madam. Will you and—the gentleman come this way?" He opened a second door. "This will take us to the back of the building. May I have a cab sent for?"

"Please," said Danvers. "I—if this lady will permit me, I'll see her home."

The girl inclined her head. . . .

A cab seemed to be waiting.

With a foot on the step—

"Would you like me to take you," said Danvers, "to have some tea? I mean——"

"Yes, please," said the girl.

"Where shall I take you?"

"Anywhere quiet, please."

Danvers gave the driver the name of his Club.

For some moments neither spoke.

At length—

"I—I'm very grateful," said the girl.

"I mean, but for you——"

She stopped abruptly there, to burst into tears.

"Oh, my dear," said Danvers.

"I can't help it," sobbed his companion.

"That—that wicked woman. . . ."

Danvers patted her sleeve.

"Please don't cry," he said gently.

"You see, we're out of the wood."

"I know. That's why I'm crying. Never mind."

With that, she wept violently.

Danvers glanced out of the window. The

streets were absurdly clear. In another two minutes they would have reached his Club.

"Shall—shall I tell him to drive round the Park?" he suggested desperately.

The girl shook her head.

"I'll be all right—in a moment. When we get there, I'll pow—powder my nose. Where—where are we going?"

Danvers swallowed.

"To an old-fashioned Club," he said.

"I thought—women weren't allowed—in men's Clubs."

"There's an annex," said Danvers. "I've never used it before."

"You mean, I'm the first? How funny." She wiped her eyes and presented a tearful face. "Do I look as if I'd been crying?"

"You—you do a little," said Danvers. "Your eyes—"

"Is my nose swollen?"—tremulously.

"Oh, no. It's only your eyes. If you don't cry any more . . ."

The girl averted her face and straightened her hat.

"I think I shall like you," she said. "You're rather like me."

"I hope you will," said Danvers.

A moment later he handed her out of the cab and into a vestibule.

A servant preceded them into a stately hall. . . .

"When you're ready," said Danvers, "he'll show you the drawing-room."

A bright eye thanked him, and he left to dispose of his coat. . . .

The drawing-room was empty, but cheerful. Danvers had seen it but once, in the cold light of day. Then the apple-green chamber had been eminently chaste. Now, with its two big fires and shaded lights, with its velvet curtains drawn and the world shut out, the place was a glowing boudoir. Chastity was warming her hands. Luxury and Charm had kissed each other. . . .

Danvers had ordered tea before my lady appeared.

She came in, twittering.

"I say, what a lovely room. D'you mean to say you've never brought anyone here before?"

"Never," said Danvers.

"Why did you bring me?"

"You said 'somewhere quiet'. Most people, I believe, like music. Won't you take off your coat and sit down?"

She turned her back in silence, and Danvers took off her coat and laid it upon a chair. A simple, short blue frock became

her admirably. And, when she stood on tiptoe and peered at herself in a glass, she might have been fresh sixteen.

"D'you like my hat?" she said.

"Yes," said Danvers. "I noticed it ages ago."

"I'm so glad. I bought it this morning. May I take it off now? It makes my head hot."

"Of course," said Danvers.

She pulled off the little hat and gave it into his hand. He laid it away with her coat. Then she shook her curls into place and sat down on a Chesterfield.

"Now I feel at home," she said contentedly.

"I'm so glad," said Danvers, and meant it.

I do not think he would have been human, if he had not. The girl was lovely. Her soft dark hair, her steady grey eyes, the curve of her exquisite mouth, her little firm hands, her slim silk legs, naked and unashamed, went to make up the miracle. Like a rare perfume, her complete artlessness immensely enhanced her beauty and glorified all she did.

Danvers, the celibate, sat down beside his guest, like a man in a dream. . . .

Tea was served: the silver and Dresden china winked in the light of the fire.

"It's like a fairy-tale," said the girl. "You're the knight, and I'm the maiden in distress, and this is the enchanted palace. Isn't it nice to have it all to ourselves?"

"That's as it should be," said Danvers. "The knight and the maiden always had the run of the place."

"Till they opened some door," said the girl. "They used to make me so wild. They were specially told that they mustn't open some door: and then they went and did it and tore everything up."

"But we won't do that," said Danvers, laughing. "Would you like to know my name?"

"Yes, please."

"Patrick Danvers."

"Oh, I am glad," said the girl. "I've always wanted to know someone called 'Patrick'. May I call you 'Pat'?"

"Please. What shall I call you?"

"Stephanie. Stephanie Beauclerk. I live with my aunt, but I don't like her very much."

"Why not?" said Danvers, taking out cigarettes.

"She's not very genuine," said Miss Beauclerk, knitting her pretty brows. "She

always makes me think of a witch. And she dances with lizards, and I have to call her 'Rocky', instead of 'Aunt May'." Danvers repressed a start. "'Rocky's'

still upon the roads when 'Rocky' Trottergill was born. This was an exaggeration, but she was getting on. Witty, unscrupulous, tough, she had married early and



"The hand was that of a woman, but not that of the owner of the coat; the latter, indeed, was plainly unaware of the attention and continued to choose a dog's lead with all her might."

her nickname, you know; but she's really quite old."

"Ah," said Patrick Danvers, and left it at that.

People used to say that the coaches were

well, and, in spite of twice changing her name, had had a very good run. This, in all decency, should have ended in 1910. Mrs. Trottergill thought otherwise. She shortened her frocks, slept with beefsteak

on her face and 'went' harder than ever. By 1915 she had become notorious, and in 1927 a byword. It is hardly necessary to add that she was not a desirable companion for a beautiful child. As a guardian . . .

"She's away for the moment," said Stephanie, "or I shouldn't be here."

"Where would you be?" said Danvers, lighting her cigarette.

Stephanie glanced at her watch.

"Cocktail time," she said, "at *The Arbour Bar*. That's what they call where I live."

"Who call it?"

"The people who come there. All sorts. I can ask you, you know; but I don't think you'd care about it, and I hope you won't come. Some are very clever, of course; I don't understand a lot of what they say."

Danvers frowned at the fire.

"Haven't you any friends of your own—Stephanie?"

The girl shook her head.

"You see, I came straight from the Convent. In Belgium, that was. I often wish I was back. And now I'm tired of myself. Let's talk about you."

Half an hour slid away before Stephanie rose to her feet.

"I've got to dine out," she said, "and to-morrow I'm going away."

Danvers stood up.

"But not for long," he said. "I—I want you to come here again."

"I'll love to." She pulled on her hat, peered in the glass for a moment and turned a glowing face. "You've been very nice to me, Pat, and it's been—divine." She stretched out her arms luxuriously. "To be able to talk to a man without his pretending he loves you. As for sitting alone in a room . . ."

"How did you know I was all right?"

Stephanie reflected, delicate finger to lip.

"I liked your voice," she said. "And you let me alone when I cried."

"That was a fluke," said Danvers. "I'd no idea what to do. To tell you the truth, I believed I ought to kiss you. I had a sort of idea that a girl in tears should be kissed. You know. Like putting a key down your back, for a bleeding nose. But I don't know much about women, and I thought it would be so awful if I did it and it was wrong."

Stephanie nodded approvingly.

"I'm so glad you didn't," she said. "I shouldn't have known you were doing it out of duty, and it would have torn every-

thing up. Of course," she added, "you mustn't go by me. I'm rather an exception. I think it would have gone with most of the girls I know."

"Let us hope," said Danvers, "that I shan't find myself so placed with anyone else."

"I do hope you won't," said Stephanie earnestly. "It is such misery, Pat. You see, you're like me. You and I don't like it, but nearly everyone does. So they all try it on, and then they say you're no sport. And some of them put it across you and others keep on keeping on."

"When it gets too thick, Stephanie, please remember that the enchanted palace is always here."

"I will, I will. Where can I ring you up? Between ten and twelve in the morning would be my best time."

Danvers stepped to a table and wrote down his Office address, adding the telephone number and that of the extension to his room. Stephanie leaned over his shoulder and read out the words.

"I love your being a herald," she said. "That's better than a knight. The herald and the maiden."

"Princess," said Danvers.

A child laid her head against his shoulder.

"Ah, Pat, but I'm not. If I were, you should be my equerry and we'd come here every day."

"Princess, by nature," said Danvers unsteadily. "And you'll come whenever you can."

Stephanie nodded vigorously.

"And we'll beat the fairy-tales," she said. "We won't open any doors."

"If I remember," said Danvers, "it was usually the princess who did that. You know. She got curious."

"But the herald let her," said Stephanie. "Instead of being firm, he gave way. He was really just as curious as she was. Look at Adam and Eve. Eve may have picked the apple, but Adam jolly well ate it. It was up to him to make her chuck it away."

"He was probably afraid," said Danvers, "that she might burst into tears."

"Well, then he could have kissed her. She probably wasn't like me."

"I bet she was," said Danvers. "Never mind." He helped her into her coat. "You don't know when you'll be back?"

"Thursday, I think. I'll ring up as soon as I can, but I don't want to give you away. If Aunt May hears of our meeting, she'll make me bring you along, and I'd

be so—so ashamed, and you would hate it so."

"Ashamed, Stephanie?"

"Upset. They're a rotten crowd. I don't want you to meet them. Good-bye."

"Mayn't I drive you home?"

"No, thanks, Pat dear. If I may have a taxi . . ."

A minute later, Danvers saw her into a cab.

With the small hand in his—

"If you don't telephone very soon, I shall write and ask why," he said.

"I will very soon. I promise."

"Good-bye, Stephanie."

"Good-bye."

Danvers walked home across the Park, pondering the changes and chances of this mortal life and marvelling at the superlative jugglery of Fate. When he reflected that, had he not stood at that counter, Stephanie Beauclerk and he would never have met, he took a deep breath; and, when he remembered that, but for the block upon the staircase, a beautiful child would have been charged with felony, he broke into a sweat.

That was the beginning of the business.

Within twenty-four hours his condition had become more serious. In a word, he had become aware that, glorious and free and blessed as is celibacy, it is nevertheless a solitary state.

* * * * *

When a week had gone by and no word had come from Stephanie, Danvers wrote her three letters and tore the lot of them up. This demonstrates pretty well his condition of mind. He had also become sharply suspicious of the telephone-clerk employed at the College of Arms. Finally, he cancelled a visit which he was to have paid to an aunt. This upset the aunt and his housekeeper: Danvers would not have cared if it had occasioned a war. Until he knew where he was, the man was not going to leave Town.

Then, on a Monday morning, a letter arrived.

*Hunchback Hall,
Leicestershire.*

My dear Pat,

I want to see you very much. We are coming back to London on Wednesday. I have not been back since I saw you. I could not have the puppy-dog after all. I told you the man we were to stay with had promised me him, but I found he wasn't to be a present so I had to let him go. And, Pat, when I was alone I cried, and when I see you I expect I

shall cry again. He was so sweet and he seemed to like me so much, and, when I went away, he howled—a tiny bit of a howl, because he was very tiny himself, as if I was letting him down. We should have stayed here only one night, but somebody kicked Aunt May on the knee, doing the Charleston, and the next day she couldn't walk. I have to play poker here, and hate it because, of course, I have to be carried, and then if you lose you feel under such an obligation. If you win it's worse still, so you get it both ways. I met an old lady here yesterday who was very nice. We talked quite a lot. She said she knew my mother who died when I was born, and told me a lot about her I never knew. She said she was a great beauty and that when it was known that she was dead some great artist who was to have painted her burst into tears, and when they asked him why he was so upset he said, 'You will never know—now'. So she must have been lovely, mustn't she? I mean, for him to say that.

With my love,

Yours very sincerely,

Stephanie.

Danvers read the note over a score of times, carried it in his case and felt the better. He may be forgiven. If you remember, he was a man of few friends.

The thought of the puppy-dog incident made him breathe through his nose. What is more to the point, it pricked him to a decision that something would have to be done.

Danvers was no Don Quixote, but he was a decent man. His tastes were simple and his life was quiet, but he was no fool. By no means worldly, he was yet a man of the world—that is to say, he could expect, recognise and contemplate without horror the failings of mankind. He had all the man of the world's flair for letting ill alone. No one knew better than he that chivalry is stone-dead and that such as seek to revive it are riding for a fall. Yet in Stephanie's case he was going to interfere. He had known as much that first evening, walking across the Park, and had blinked the fact as preposterous. The case was a bad one, but what on earth could he do? Besides . . .

Beyond recording that he argued alternately that he had been bewitched and that his dread of interference had already almost landed Stephanie in gaol, it is unnecessary to set out Danvers' searchings of heart. The latter did little more than make him face squarely the fact he had blinked. By

hook or by crook Stephanie must be plucked out of the world of Hogarth in which she moved. And he must do it—somehow. It was absurd, of course, melodramatic, but one couldn't stand by and see a child go down.

He lay awake most of that night, wondering how on earth he should go to work.

The obvious course of marriage he rejected at once.

For one thing, his head insisted that men do not fall in love in an afternoon, that a runaway match was indecent, that such things are not done and that, if they are, there is presently the devil to pay; for another, it would be unfair. Of this he was perfectly convinced. To such a child marriage would be an adventure—an adventurous way of escape from 'Rocky' and poker and a hundred ills. She would enter the state, rather as she had entered his Club, in some excitement. Such a way was not to be taken. It would be like proposing to play a baby at golf. . . .

At last he fell asleep, with a hammering brain. Three hours later he was called, and, such is the perversity of mother-wit, before the curtains had been drawn he had perceived the way.

He spent the morning of Tuesday laying his plans. Then he obtained a copy of Stephanie's birth-certificate and visited his solicitor during the afternoon. The latter was sympathetic and, finding his client resolved, gave him and his project two invaluable hours of his valuable time. Before Danvers left his office, a deed of sorts had been drafted and by noon on Wednesday, unknown to Stephanie Beauclerk, John Galbraith Forsyth, Solicitor, had been appointed her trustee.

* * * * *

Stephanie came to tea on the following day.

The enchanted palace was not crowded, but other knights and maidens were proving its charm. They all looked at Stephanie very hard. One or two of the knights surreptitiously moved their seats, so that they could observe her more conveniently.

Before tea was over, Danvers had elicited two facts. The first was that 'Rocky' was Stephanie's only relative, and the second that, so far as she knew, the girl had no fortune of her own.

"So I'm very lucky, really," she said. "I mean I've got no money, and yet I don't have to work. And I go all over the place and have a wonderful time. Only, you see,

I don't want it. I don't think I'd like it even if they let me alone. Aunt May says I can't manage men, and I suppose she's right. I'm always in trouble, Pat. The puppy-dog business was awful. Aunt May was simply wild. You see, the man was our host. . . ."

"I see," said Danvers thickly. "Did you know you had a trustee?"

Stephanie opened her eyes.

"I did not."

"Well, you have. I happen to know him quite well. He's a solicitor. I saw him yesterday, and, when he heard I was to see you, he gave me this note."

Stephanie stared at her name. Then she opened the envelope reverently enough.

Private and Confidential.

Dear Miss Beauclerk,

By the terms of a Settlement of which you are not, I think, aware, you will upon your twenty-second birthday become entitled to the use of a small freehold house in Westminster and to a private income of eight hundred pounds a year. These benefits will continue until your marriage, when they will come to an end. The maintenance of the house and the payment of three servants is also provided for. Of this Settlement I am the sole trustee, and, if you will come to see me as soon as you can, I will explain the position and do my best to assist you in every way.

Yours faithfully,

J. G. Forsyth.

Stephanie put a hand to her head.

"A house?" she said dazedly. "And eight hundred pounds a year? Me? It must be a mistake."

"Forsyth doesn't make mistakes," said Danvers. "May I see what he says?"

The letter passed.

At length—

"That's clear enough," said Danvers, giving it back. "He told me you'd be your own mistress when you were twenty-two, but he naturally left it there. Lawyers mayn't talk, you know."

The girl caught at his arm.

"But, Pat! My own house and servants and—and eight hundred pounds a year! It's like a dream. It's—oh, Pat, I think I'm going to cry."

"If you do," said Danvers, "I shall kiss you." Stephanie swallowed ominously. "I'll—I'll make a meal of it. Before everyone." A burst of talk from a table six paces away pointed the threat. "There's nothing

to cry about. Your luck's come in—with a bang. But I shouldn't say a word to a soul, until you've seen Forsyth. When can you go?"

"I don't know. I can't believe it, Pat. Aunt May won't——"

"Aunt May be burned," said Danvers. "You're going to be your own mistress. How soon are you twenty-two?"

"Next week—Tuesday."

"Well, at midnight next Monday Aunt May will cease to count. It mayn't amuse her, but it's a very hard fact. You'll have your own house, your own money and your own friends. You'll see whom you please and only whom you please. If anyone comes to see you that you don't like, your servants will send them away. You will be *independent*. No one will count except you."

"You will, Pat." The man caught his breath. "Always. But—oh, my dear, I wish we'd got the room to ourselves. I want to hold on to you. What d'you think the house will be like?"

"How on earth can I tell?" said Danvers, laughing. "You must go and see Forsyth."

"I believe it's an old house," said Stephanie excitedly. "A little old house, with beams. And a flagged court at the back and a sundial. You'll come very often, won't you, Pat? You must come to dinner. And, when we've finished, I shall leave you, and then, when you've drunk enough, you'll come upstairs. I expect the drawing-room will be upstairs. And we'll sit by the fire and talk. And I shan't bother about any clocks, because we'll always have Big Ben. And sometimes you can take me to the theatre, and—oh, Pat, my dear, I'm going to be so awfully happy."

In that moment, I think, Danvers had his reward. The look upon Stephanie's face was not of this world. The light in her great grey eyes, the exquisite parting of her lips, declared such things as will not go into words. The wild thing about to be set free was viewing its kingdom to come.

"You must go and see Forsyth," said Danvers uncertainly. "Can you manage to-morrow?"

His companion nodded abstractedly.

"I must—somehow. Will you come with me?"

"I think you'd better see him alone. I can make an appointment for you."

"Would ten o'clock be too early? Aunt May gets up rather late."

Danvers rose.

"You stay here," he said. "I'll ring him up right away."

"Thank you, Pat."

He returned ten minutes later, to find Stephanie seated upon a table, listening with rapt attention to the respectful reminiscences of the aged Groom of the Chambers who had served the Club, body and soul, for fifty-seven years.

The other members and their guests had disappeared.

"Hullo, Massey," said Danvers. "Going the rounds?"

"Good evening, sir. Yes, sir. I was telling her ladyship how I came to the Club as a 'Buttons' in 'fifty-nine'."

"And no one might smoke in the Club, Pat, except in one tiny room."

"And my grandfather'd just been elected," said Danvers. "The family M.P."

"I remember him well, sir," said Massey. "Many's the hansom I've fetched him for him to go down to the House." He bowed with the peculiar dignity of the old manservant. "Good evening, my lady. Good evening, sir."

The next moment he was gone.

"He shouldn't call me 'my lady'," said Stephanie.

"That's your fault," said Danvers. "If you don't want to be worshipped, you mustn't look so sweet."

Stephanie regarded him gravely. Then her eyes fell to the ground.

"That's the way they all talk," she said. "The others, I mean. You're not going to be like them, Pat? You're not going to open the door and tear everything up?"

Danvers' heart stood still.

Stephanie raised her eyes and put out her hands.

"Don't say you are, Pat! Just when we've found each other, and I'm going to be on my own."

The man pulled himself together, turned away and sat down.

"Of course I'm not," he said slowly. "I—I was only pulling your leg."

Stephanie slid from the table, settled herself by his side and slid a warm arm through his.

"I'm so glad," she said contentedly. "And now what does Forsyth say?"

* * * * *

"Until you marry," said Forsyth. "Then the income will cease and so will your right to the house."

"Oh, I don't mind that," said Miss Beau-

clerk, "because I shan't have to marry now. That's what's been so awful about the last two months. She hasn't spoken to me, but I'm perfectly sure Aunt May's been fixing me up. You can tell, you know."

"Ah," said Forsyth. "By the way, I shouldn't say anything to her. When Tuesday comes, I should pack up some things and clear out. Leave a note, thanking her very much for all she's done, enclosing the letter I sent you and giving her your new address."

"I expect she'll roll up," said Stephanie. "Almost at once."

"So do I," said Forsyth. "That's why I shall be there—to see you in."

"You mean you'll explain things to her?"

"Yes," said Forsyth. "And now, as I said, I'm afraid you can't see the house until the day. You see, it's been let all this time, and the people won't be leaving till the day before you come in. But I think the servants might stay on: there's a man and his wife and a girl, and, as they know the house, it would be as well. Of course, if they don't suit you, you can very soon send them away."

"Thank you very much," said Stephanie. "But I expect they'll be far better than any that I should get. Can I go and see the outside?"

"I don't think I should," said Forsyth. "I should keep it all till the day."

"All right," said Stephanie. "Like a present you don't undo."

"That's the idea. And I'll be there, sharp at ten, to see you in. And, perhaps, in the afternoon we might go to the Bank. You know, Miss Beauclerk, eight hundred a year's not too bad, but it won't go a very long way. I mean . . ."

"I think it's a heap," said Stephanie. "I'm not at all extravagant. You see, the girl can wash my stockings and things, and that'll save no end of money. Besides, the laundries always do them in. They put something in the water, you know. And the last one we tried burnt one of my chemises all down the front."

By a supreme effort, Forsyth maintained his gravity.

"I can quite believe it," he said. "They're a ruthless lot. But all I meant, Miss Beauclerk, was that eight hundred is all right to live on, but when you've paid the books and the dressmaker, I don't think there'll be very much left."

"I only want to live," said Stephanie.

"I don't like razzling at all. And I'm sure I *could* live on a hundred pounds a year, so I shall really be rolling. And now won't you please tell me how I've come into all this? I know you're my trustee, but where does the money come from? And whose is the house? And why didn't Aunt May tell me ages ago?"

"I don't think she knows," said Forsyth. "When this Settlement was made, no one was told except me. And if you were married already, you'd never have known of it yourself. That's the Law all over. It moves in a mysterious way, setting one man up and taking another down. Its documents are full of dead contingencies—old secrets never disclosed. So, if I were you, I shouldn't bother my head."

Stephanie nodded gravely.

"But I'm very grateful," she said. "It was very sweet of someone to be so kind to me." She rose to her feet, and Forsyth passed to the door. "Then you'll be there on Tuesday at ten o'clock?"

"Without fail," said Forsyth.

Stephanie put out a small hand.

"I'm so glad I can thank you," she said.

* * * * *

On Monday evening Danvers left Queen Square and drove to a private hotel.

Of his occupation of the little, old-fashioned house no personal trace remained. Books that had borne his name had been removed, every drawer had been emptied, even the relevant page of the Telephone Directory had been cut out.

His cook-housekeeper and his man had put up a desperate fight, but, after four several battles, had grudgingly consented to serve the young lady for one calendar month, "provided, in course, she should want us to stay so long, sir, which I very much doubt, for Gravel an' me's old-fashioned ways. We can't do the parties an' what-not they 'ave to-day, nor keep the 'ouse what it should be, sir, with company in an' out all day an' 'alf the night. Why, Gravel'd be no more use than a dog in a fair, sir, an' I can't do without notice an' never could."

Their promise to stay extracted, Danvers had worried no more. The two would be Stephanie's slaves within the week. They had, of course, been charged to keep his counsel.

"Miss Beauclerk must never dream that this was my home. You must watch the letters and take all telephone-calls. And, if I come, I shall come as a visitor. And

please remember, Gravel, that you've never seen me before. If you want me, you can find me at the College or else at ——'s Hotel."

"Very good, sir," said Gravel miserably.

And on Monday, as I have said, Danvers went.

On Tuesday at a quarter to ten Forsyth arrived, and, ten minutes later, Stephanie Beauclerk herself.

As Danvers had foreseen, her installation was a rapturous success: as Forsyth had foreseen, Mrs. Trottergill appeared upon the scene shortly before midday.

Her niece received her in the drawing-room politely enough.

"May I introduce Mr. Forsyth—Mrs. Trottergill?"

The latter looked the lawyer up and down.

"What on earth does this mean?" she said.

"It means," said Forsyth, "that, until she marries, this is Miss Beauclerk's house."

"By whose orders?"

"By my instructions," said Forsyth.

"Who are you acting for?"

"I am acting as the trustee of a Settlement, the terms of which not even Miss Beauclerk knows; but I may say that it is a Voluntary Settlement, that is to say, it is *without any consideration*. It offers Miss Beauclerk this house and a competent income: it requires nothing in return."

'Rocky' Trottergill lighted a cigarette.

"Stephanie," she said, "you can leave us."

The girl did so at once.

'Rocky' sat down on a sofa and put up her pitiful legs. Then she took Forsyth's measure, for Forsyth to see. So far from disconcerting the lawyer, the process suited him well. The sooner the lady perceived what manner of man stood before her, the better for both.

At length—

"I wasn't foaled last month," she said sharply.

Forsyth inclined his head. The movement suggested his delicate recognition of an unfortunate fact.

Mrs. Trottergill frowned.

"Who's behind you in this?"

"I have told you, madam, that there is no consideration. If there had been, I should have refused to act. As there is none, I am prepared to defy the curiosity of Miss Beauclerk herself."

"I am her guardian."

This was untrue, as both knew.

"I did not know that," said Forsyth politely. "In any event, Miss Beauclerk is of age."

"D'you seriously suggest that a child such as she is can possibly live by herself?"

Forsyth uncovered his guns.

"I have reason to think," he said, "that she will be very particular about her company."

Mrs. Trottergill veered.

"I suppose you know she's practically engaged?"

"No," said Forsyth.

"Well, she is," said 'Rocky'.

This statement was founded on fact. 'Joss' Stuggenbaum, a notorious evil-liver who had great possessions, had promised her 'guardian' fifteen thousand pounds on the day he married the 'child'. Determined to secure twenty, 'Rocky' had demanded twenty-five. Her demand had been rejected and the offer renewed. The matter had been simmering for nearly two months.

Forsyth looked out of the window.

"Does *she* know she's—practically engaged?"

Mrs. Trottergill's eyes narrowed.

"What's sauce for the gander," she said, "is sauce for the goose. You tell her no more than you think it good for her to know."

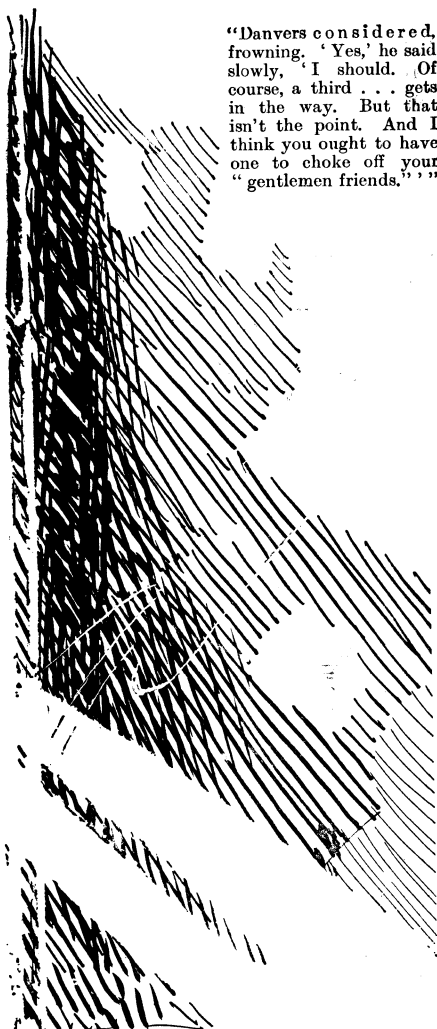
"Quite so," said Forsyth, "quite so. But, if you remember, I said that, had there been any question of consideration, I should have refused to act." He paused. Then, "*You will forgive my asking if you can say the same.*"

Before this broadside, Mrs. Trottergill sprang to her feet.

"Do you suggest——"

"Madam," said Forsyth, "you told me just now that you were not foaled last month. *Neither was I*. Consequently, both of us know that Miss Beauclerk's body can command a very high price. I am proud to act for an idealist who sets a still higher value upon her soul."

A queer, bleak expression swept into 'Rocky's' face. Her mouth began to work uncontrollably. It was all punk, of course. The man was spouting religion—Sunday-school slush. The cheapest curate wouldn't have handed out such sob-stuff. . . . The trouble was he wasn't a curate. He was—it was absurd, of course, fantastic, but he—he had the air of a Judge. Burn it, why couldn't she answer—put him where he



"Danvers considered, frowning. 'Yes,' he said slowly, 'I should. Of course, a third . . . gets in the way. But that isn't the point. And I think you ought to have one to choke off your 'gentlemen friends,' "

belonged? Why couldn't she keep her mouth still? Why . . .

Forsyth touched the bell and stepped to the door.

"I hope it will be unnecessary for your niece to tell her servants that she is 'not at home' if you call."

Somebody laughed. With a shock, Mrs. Trottergill realised that it had been she.

"Quite," she said shakily. "Quite unnecessary—thank you. Don't—don't bother to see me out. I . . ."

She stopped there. Clearly her tongue was unruly. She had not meant to say that. She had meant to say . . .

An old woman passed out of the house.

* * * * *

Five months had gone by, and, after a miserable period of civil war, in which body

rose up against spirit and matter against mind, Danvers had found himself.

The man was deeply in love, but he had himself in hand. God knows what it had cost him to make good. There were times when he had dined at his own table, sat in his own drawing-room and presently let himself out of his own house with the sweat running down his face. There were times when he had not dared to visit the house at all. He had, he knew, confounded charity with love. He had saved Stephanie, because he loved her, and for no other reason at all. So far, so good. Love in the habit of Charity may be an exquisite thing. *But the habit must not be abused—must not be employed to carry Love out of her prison . . . upstairs and downstairs and into my lady's chamber.*

Danvers had had a bad time. He had done alms, and his left hand was continually staring at what his right hand had done. The man found its stare offensive, but could not make up his mind to cut it off. And then at last he did it—and found himself.

One soft September morning he swallowed the fact that Stephanie was in balk. His honour was demanding this point of view. And until his honour was satisfied he would know no peace. Then and there he took his resolve and dined with the lady that evening with singular content.

His hostess noticed the change, and, when they had passed upstairs, to sit by the open windows and hear the great cry of

London threatening the silent eclogue of St. James's Park, mentioned it directly, without any waste of words.

"What is it, Pat? You're different. You make me think of a dog in front of a fire, all lazy and contented and blinking."

Danvers smiled.

"I'm just the same, Stephanie."

The girl shook her head.

"I've never seen you like this. Are you beginning to feel at home here?"

"Perhaps."

"I've been rather hurt," said Miss Beauclerk, "that you've taken such a long time. I felt at home at your Club the first time you took me to tea."

"I've felt at home here—perfectly."

"Then why did you say 'perhaps'?"

"Line of least resistance," said Danvers, filling a pipe.

"Would you like to go to a cinema?"



"'I don't think I could bear one,' said Stephanie. 'She'd always be saying I mustn't do this or that.'"

HOWARD
ELCOCK

"No," said Stephanie. "I'd rather sit here and talk. Tell me, Pat. Why don't you marry?" Danvers started, and his pipe fell to the ground. "Marringer says you should."

Marringer was the housemaid who had 'gone with the house'.

Subduing the impulse to request that Marringer should be dismissed the next morning at eight o'clock, Danvers picked up his pipe and moistened his lips.

"Perhaps," he said, "I'm not a marrying man. Some people aren't, you know."

"That's what I said," said Stephanie, lighting a cigarette. "But she said you were. She said she'd watched you, while she was helping Gravel, and that what you wanted was a wife."

Danvers could have ground his teeth.

Instead—

"Marringer," he said unsteadily, "is talking through her hat. It's—it's very kind of her to take so much interest in me, but——"

"Oh, but she loves you," said Stephanie. "They all do. I didn't know Mrs. Gravel had seen you, but she has and she thinks you're wonderful, Pat."

Danvers laid down his pipe and casually mopped his face.

"You shouldn't listen to servants," he said. "If more people came here——"

"They're very respectful," said Stephanie. "Besides, Forsyth thinks so too. He told me he knew no man for whom he had a higher respect."

"If you don't stop," said Danvers, "I shall say 'Good night' and go home. I came here to talk about you, not to listen to the—the vapourings of minds diseased."

"Forsyth's mind isn't diseased," said Stephanie. "Besides, I went to see him on purpose to talk about you."

"About me?"

Miss Beauclerk nodded.

"I was worried about you," she said. "You're too thin, Pat. And I thought perhaps Forsyth would help."

"That was very sweet of you, Stephanie, but I'm perfectly well. What—what did Forsyth say?"

"He said you wanted looking after—that you worked too hard and took no care of yourself."

Danvers rose and stepped on to the balcony.

An infant breeze slid along Birdcage Walk, touching his temples as it went.

Danvers breathed gratefully and decided to go out of Town the following day.

Presently he turned, to lean against the iron balustrade and look at the beautiful child that was twisting his tail.

Stephanie, all in white, was making, as always, a picture of artless elegance. One slim leg was tucked beneath her, her delicate arms lay along those of the chair, her dark head, thrown back, rested against its head. The dazzling beauty of her throat was thus fully exposed, and, indeed, the pose was presenting all her physical loveliness as no jeweller can present a rare stone, set he never so wisely.

Danvers found himself gripping the iron of the balustrade. . . .

"Oh, I knew I had something to tell you," said Miss Beauclerk. "Old Mr. Stuggenbaum's started in again. I met him in Bond Street on Tuesday. I'd imagined it would be safe and that everyone would have gone. He tried to make me come to lunch, and, when I went into a shop, he came in and tried to pay. In the end I had to get on a 'bus. He tried to get on too, but he was too late. Of course, he rolled up here at a quarter to three. Gravel said I was out, but I don't think he believed him. He walked up and down Queen Square for over two hours. I was so mad. I wanted to go to The Tower. And the next day he sent me some flowers, but I sent them back to the shop."

"That's the style," said Danvers.

"I know, but isn't it sickening? You see, I like going out and I love the shops. Of course, if I meet them, I'm perfectly ready to speak; but that's not enough. They insist on walking with me, and Georges Rosqui stopped a taxi and tried to make me get in. In Bond Street. And it's so awkward, Pat, and people begin to stare."

"It's outrageous," said Danvers hotly. "Did you tell Forsyth this?"

Stephanie nodded.

"He said I should have a companion—whom I could trust."

"I think you should," said Danvers. "In fact, you ought to have had one all along. Of course, you should."

Miss Beauclerk wrinkled her nose.

"She'd be awfully in the way, Pat. I like to have you to myself. Wouldn't you just hate it, if she were here now?"

Danvers considered, frowning.

"Yes," he said slowly, "I should. Of course, a third . . . gets in the way. But that isn't the point. And I think you ought to have one to choke off your 'gentlemen friends'."

"I don't think I could bear one," said Stephanie. "She'd always be saying I mustn't do this or that. She wouldn't let me sit as I am, with a leg underneath. She'd say it wasn't ladylike or something. And she'd go on about my clothes: I know she would. And I'm quite good at clothes, Pat: I am really. I haven't very many, but I get the right things. And—and she'd never leave us alone, Pat. Not if you stayed till four. She'd stick like glue and make out it was her job."

"I'm afraid it would be," said Danvers ruefully. "Till now I never gave it a thought, but I oughtn't to dine here like this alone with you."

Stephanie sat up very straight.

"But, Pat, it's my home. Surely I can ask who I like."

"You wouldn't ask any odd man."

"Of course not. Besides, I don't. I only ask you."

"In the eyes of Convention I am 'any odd man'."

"You're not in mine," said Miss Beauclerk.

"I know, Stephanie, but—I don't know why I've never thought of it, but I really oughtn't to come. And—and I mustn't come any more."

"Pat!"

The child was up out of her chair and standing with her hands on his shoulders, looking up into his face.

Danvers tried to lift up his heart and steady his voice.

"We must get you a lady-in-waiting," he said. "Some nice, understanding woman, who——"

"I don't want her, Pat. I don't want her. I love it when you come here, because we're alone. The knight and the maiden never had anyone else, and why should we?"

The man was shaking. Stephanie's eager breath beat upon his face. Her eyes peered into his—two glorious suppliants, praying him to spare the pretty, precious bubble that he and she had blown.

"Stephanie dear, for your sake it's better

so. Forsyth is right—as always. I'll go and see him to-morrow."

The girl set a hand to her eyes and stood very still.

Then she put her arms round his neck and lowered her head.

"Won't you marry me, Pat?" she said.

Danvers' heart gave one tremendous bound.

For a moment he stood paralysed; then he took the child in his arms.

"You see, Pat darling, you don't take care of yourself, and I can't take care of myself, but, if you married me, we could take care of each other."

"Stephanie, Stephanie!"

A princess gave him her lips. . . .

"But if you marry," said the herald. . . .

"I know. I must leave this house. But I'll never care, my darling, if I'm to be with you."

"Oh, Stephanie, I love you so."

A child rubbed her cheek against his.

"And you wouldn't say so," she said.

"I tried so hard to make you, because I was sure you did. None of the others ever say anything else, but the one I wanted to say it would not speak. And so I had to. I couldn't go on, my darling; so I had to propose to you. But I don't think it matters, really. I mean, no one need know."

Danvers picked her up and carried her into the room.

"I told you," he said, "it was the maiden who always opened the door."

"Ah," said Stephanie, "but this is a different door. They never had doors like this in the fairy-tales. They opened into gardens or closets; but this . . ."

"What does this let us into?"

Stephanie knitted her brows.

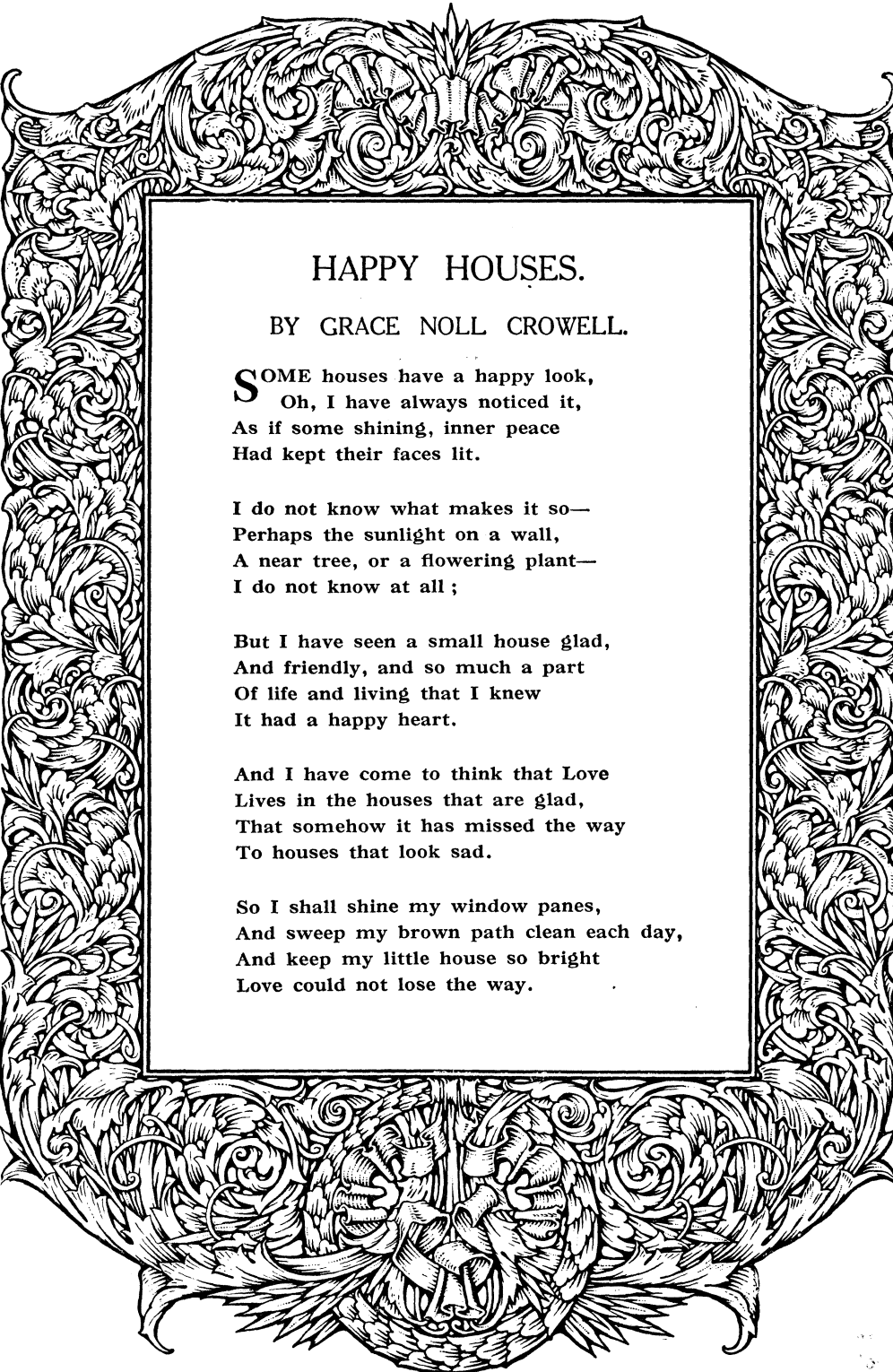
"I don't know," she said. "Yes, I do. It lets me into your life, Pat." She kissed him breathlessly. "And that's all I want, my darling, as long as I live."

Danvers set her down and held her at arm's length.

"Now can I tell you how perfectly beautiful you are?"

His mistress nodded and buried her face in his coat.





HAPPY HOUSES.

BY GRACE NOLL CROWELL.

SOME houses have a happy look,
Oh, I have always noticed it,
As if some shining, inner peace
Had kept their faces lit.

I do not know what makes it so—
Perhaps the sunlight on a wall,
A near tree, or a flowering plant—
I do not know at all ;

But I have seen a small house glad,
And friendly, and so much a part
Of life and living that I knew
It had a happy heart.

And I have come to think that Love
Lives in the houses that are glad,
That somehow it has missed the way
To houses that look sad.

So I shall shine my window panes,
And sweep my brown path clean each day,
And keep my little house so bright
Love could not lose the way.

HIS PRIVATE ROAD

By G. B. STERN

ILLUSTRATED BY WILL LONDON

"THIS time," the Cavalliere reassured himself, "this time nothing will prevent me from telling them about it. At first I will remonstrate with dignity; and then, if they argue, I will put my fist down, and say that nothing, nothing, but nothing is sufficient excuse for what they have done and for what they do. And then, having made myself clear, I will go away."

But the Cavalliere Roméo de la Torre had worked himself up into exactly the same state before, and unfortunately without result. His English tenants at Santa Justina—they were so friendly, so oblivious of having done wrong, so exasperatingly innocent of any except the friendliest intention in his visit. Even when he arrived with a heavy scowl darkening his blue eyes—for he had the fairness and tawny-gold hair that is fairly common among Northern Italians—they welcomed him heartily; and he could not help responding to their heartiness, for it was in his nature to be polite, to clasp his hands, to bow and deprecate, thanking them shyly a thousand times over when they rushed forward with a cocktail for him, when they dashed about to get cigarettes, matches, the most comfortable armchair . . . He simply could not help saying: "No—but please—I disturb—no, no, but thank you very much—yes, aw-ful-ly na-eece—but I beg you . . ." And by the time all the preliminary writhing and rocking was over, it was too late to begin his row, and he had to go away again.

Sometimes he even dimly suspected that they might be doing it all on purpose, guessing his intention in coming up; but indeed he over-estimated their sense of premonition. The Dawkins family were not subtle, and they greeted their youthful landlord in this robust fashion because

that was their natural style; and besides, it amused the younger ones to watch the elaborate spiral of his deprecation. But it did not occur to them for one instant that he could possibly have climbed the hill from his house to theirs in order to make a row. For what the deuce was there to make a row about? Certainly he had pleaded with them more than once not to drive heavy traffic over his road after rain-fall; pointing out at the same time, in a frenzy of admiration for nature, how far more picturesque was the mule-track, even for walking . . . "And besides, you see," the Cavalliere had urged, "my road it is not yet completed, finished. Wait—presently I have men in; they work on it. I have engage old Beppo for half a day next Wednesday, and you see—he will make it awful-ly na-eece. But until then . . ."

"Old Beppo, for half a day?" interrupted Mr. Dawkins boisterously. "Why, my boy, what's the good of that? What you need on that road's a steam-roller!"

At once, de la Torre's soul winced and shot away from the fatal suggestion, as a lizard, when prodded, will dart into the nearest crevice of the hot wall. A steam-roller . . . Dio! But would they *never* understand? How often must he explain that here in Italy a steam-roller costs money, good money, beautiful money! It cannot be hired for less than a week, and the minimum charge is two hundred and fifty lire a day. A steam-roller! Body of Bacchus! Let these English tenants be not so careless with their clumsy feet and their clumsy carriages all over the road, and up and down it, and to and fro, and there will be no need for a steam-roller!

Steam-roller! . . .

But while, volubly, he scolded and shrilled and explained, twisted his shoulders and worked his arms, he was suffering such

an agony of internal conflict as would have amazed kind, fat Mrs. Dawkins, or kind, blunt Mr. Dawkins, or any of the noisy, unimaginative younger members of the Dawkins tribe; for the road, the private road, that swooped round in a wide bend from his villa beside the lake, to theirs, and zigzagged still farther up the hill—this road was his love and his mistress and his pride. When he denied it a steam-roller, his refusal was no less than a betrayal; and the Cavalliere knew it. For, indeed, his road badly needed a steam-roller passed over the ridges of its loose and broken surface; and these English were always rubbing it in, in the bluff and tactless way of their nation. “But a steam-roller costa too much!” cried the Cavalliere passionately to the blue sky above him; and he knelt and tried to smooth down a rut with his hands; and he picked up a big, jagged stone, and cast it down the hill. There! Was not that better? Why, yes, it was a beautiful road . . . A length of satin . . . A miracle. It was *his* road! His private road!

It is not given to many men to own a road before they are twenty-two; and the Cavalliere, who was still a boy, felt, the moment he saw it, all of a boy's sudden devotion and over-vehement sense of property. Before inheriting, a few months ago, the little de la Torre estate on the shores of one of the smaller Italian lakes, he had never even visited his uncle. A family feud between two brothers accounted for that; feud typical of their race; typical, even, of Roméo's name. . . . He was by birth a Venetian. His father had laughed incredulously when the young dandy of gondola and palazzo had, after inspection of his inheritance, written home to announce his firm intention of actually—yes, actually *living* there, on Lago Justinia, and of cultivating the maize and peaches and Indian corn which grew abundantly on the surrounding slopes.

“That will not endure,” said Roméo's Papa, slashing at the air with prophetic forefinger. “It is an affair of love which keeps him there now. And love passes . . .”

It was, indeed, an affair of love; though Roméo's Papa would have dismissed as a lunatic any messenger attempting to convince him that the only rival to the daughter-in-law he was carefully selecting for himself, on his son's twenty-fifth birthday, was a road, a winding road, a road of earth and loose stones and precarious

ditches, and hillocks, mud and ruts and ridges.

But in Roméo de la Torre, the parallel absorption of wresting a profit out of the cultivation of his few thousand square metres of hill-side, and thus proudly justifying his new career to his family in Venice, met and clashed with his idol and his devotion. And, so far, shrewdness had won. A steam-roller? “One must not rob oneself,” argued the Cavalliere, as he zealously gathered in his harvests.

And the road, from a material point of view, was good enough for its purpose. It could carry, quite adequately, the carts that lurched and jolted up and down, filled with manure or market produce. Why therefore need he spend any of his still too slim profits on making it level and smooth and polished? You have, to spend money on a road before it is even adequate, and large sums of money before it is peerless. This road of the de la Torre property was all rocks and earth; and on the hill side of it, it ran down into a deep ditch; and on the side where it dropped to the lake, it bulged loosely over a tumbled wall; and the surface was rugged, and deeply wrinkled by wheel-marks, and every now and then it clustered into stony hillocks, and then sagged into holes, and meandered on again. About a hundred yards farther on from the house which the Dawkins family had rented for five years from Roméo de la Torre's late uncle, a proceeding which left the disgusted new master quite helpless, it had merged half-heartedly from a road into a path . . . and then its spirit failed again, and it decided to become a mere track through a bog; and finally it squelched away into utter nothingness.

The trouble with the Dawkins family, who were hopelessly utilitarian, was this: to them a road was something to be used, something on which you went from one place to another. In very dry weather this did not matter; but this spring had been unusually rainy, and the ground was sodden most of the time. And in spite of that, in spite of what one might have expected to be his more gentle, reverent and humane instincts, Captain Bryant obstinately drove up and down it, or at any rate up it, every day of his life, in a hired vettura, sometimes with two horses.

Captain Bryant had been staying with the Dawkins family for the last three months. He was supposed to be “a crock”; that is to say, he had been damaged

in the War, and his heart had suffered. Therefore he drove. "If I walk up that beastly mule-track," he was wont to explain laboriously to his friends, "I can't get my old breath . . ." And he said the same again to-day, when the Cavalliere came up to protest indignantly about the deep scars that the wheels of the carriage from the town had last night inflicted on the road.

mille! No—it is too much—I do not drink the half. . . . Ah, grazie, grazie! No, I will not sit—I disturb—Pardon! . . ."

"I'm afraid I have to drive up," repeated Captain Bryant, whom the Dawkins family called Phil. "It's my old breath, you see!" And he rapped himself in the region where his breath might reasonably be supposed to abide.



The Cavalliere looked sympathetic, but inwardly he was unbelieving. With the intolerance of his extreme youth, he argued that Captain Bryant was a man, and men could walk; or else Captain Bryant was a seek-man — and seek-men stayed at home.

And here the Dawkins family, had they guessed his reflections, might have agreed with him. They knew well enough that "old Phil" really was

. . . "Scusi, scusi!" murmured Roméo de la Torre. Swifter than the fall of an apple from a tree, he had fallen in love. . . . He was rapt. He was inarticulate. Anger melted from him."

a crock, and was far from putting it on. Then why the dickens need he go down every day of his life, and have his rotten little drink at that rotten little café beside the lake, and then drive home again, whatever the weather, and however rotten he felt? It seemed a piffing sort of idea. It wasn't as though he bathed, or did anything really cheery. Being so ill, he was a jolly sight better at home, sitting quietly in the garden. He could mix himself a drink up here at home, every bit as good, and better, than what they served out to you down at the Grande Café di Europea Santa Justinia.

For he actually had managed, in spite of the usual rush of welcome and offers of drink, to utter some slight complaint—though it was not the outburst of rage which he had intended. He had intended to deliver an ultimatum; instead of which: "You must forgive me that I come, but if you do not drive, it would be better after long rains. . . . The road—it suffer—I have the expense—I— Pardon me! Ah, thank you, thank you! Merci! Grazie

And neither the Cavalliere, who was also a little boy at his games, nor the Dawkins family, who played games only officially, with balls and bats and racquets and clubs, could understand that Phil Bryant was playing the café-game, and deriving from it immense satisfaction and spiritual swagger. No good telling them about it, of course.

You played it best alone! But he would not abandon it—not though it rained in streams, not though the road was soaked with mud, and he had to drive both forwards and backwards, carving it into yet deeper ruts and wrinkles; not though the Cavalliere begged him not to take a carriage during, or directly after, wet weather. . . . “Why shouldn’t I?” thought Phil. “A road’s meant to be used!” “Why must he?” reflected Roméo de la Torre. “He could walk—or he could sit and drink at home. . . .”

II.

THE Cavalliere was leaning over his garden wall, and watching, with an expression of satisfied ferocity on his fair chubby face, some impressive work of construction that was going on just below. The labourers were *his* men, and they were using *his* wood and *his* time, being paid with *his* money, to erect a heavy cross-barred gate across *his* road. For these were his orders, flung out at the climax of boyish bad temper when the very next day after his last interview with the Dawkins family and their house-party—Phil was their house-party!—he had once again seen that brutto Captain Bryant driving solemnly past, down the road . . . and, a couple of hours later, back again, the wheels of the carriage ruthlessly pressing down the exquisite gloss of its surface. “Basta!” screamed the Cavalliere. “Basta! It is enough!” And such was the energy of his annoyance, combined with the delightful realisation of his adult power as owner of the property, that within a few hours all of his men, who should have been at work among the maize and Indian corn, making good soldi for their young master, were commanded to relinquish whatever they were doing, and instead to devote themselves to throwing up this mighty barrier across the private road just outside the Cavalliere’s house, a few yards along from where it forked off the main road which looped the lake.

Roméo de la Torre chuckled sardonically, thinking of the immense bolt and padlock that he had just purchased. Every time, now, that they wanted to go up or down, those English on top of the hill, they would have to ask permission for the gates to be unlocked. Naturally, the permission could not be withheld: they, as his tenants, had the right to use the road; but still, it would be mightily inconvenient for them, inconvenient and humiliating. Aha! he would teach them not to be so light-hearted with

their carriages during rainy weather! He would teach them who was lord and overmaster here—teach them with stout wood and iron! Let them use the mule-track more, these fat and lazy ones! They would be surprised, that Dawkeens and his house-party, when they saw the gate which he, a full-sized man, the Cavalliere de la Torre, had built for the protection of his frail love and lady!

And indeed, they were both surprised and bewildered. They could not understand *why* the fellow had done it, knowing nothing whatever of his obsession, nor of the terrific scenes and arguments which he confidently supposed he had had with them on this matter, but which, in reality, had happened only in his own brain. They found it difficult to believe that anyone should have spent hard cash on anything quite so solid or quite so futile as this new gate.

“Must have cost him a pretty penny!” said Mr. Dawkins, in conclave with his sons and his daughter and his wife, and Phil Bryant. “He’s not old enough to be running this place without advice. Y’know, there’s no *sense* in the things he does. Nobody uses that road except him and us, and he knows well enough we’ve got a right to it; so who’s he trying to keep out?”

“Perhaps he’s got a vendetta with someone,” suggested Joan Dawkins, brightly. “He might be afraid they’ll steal in at night and murder him. People do, in Italy, don’t they?”

“Well, but he keeps it locked during the day, when he’s working out on the hill himself. Infernal nuisance!” grumbled Mr. Dawkins. “Always having to ask for the key, and waiting about until one gets it, or until he’s fetched, or until his servant comes. He’s got to give us a key, of course.”

“Can’t get away from the law,” put in Captain Bryant, with a ponderous nod. “I once knew a—”

“Oh, yes,” assented fat Mrs. Dawkins, hastily, for she grew bored with Phil’s stories that began with: “I once knew a . . .” “Of course he’ll have to give us a key. We must ask him for it. You ask him, Father.”

“*You* can ask him,” retorted her husband.

“It comes better from a woman.”

“It isn’t a question of coming better,” quoth Phil again. “You can’t get away from the law. I once . . .”

“Bertie could ask him,” said Joan.

"They're the same age. I believe he likes Bertie the best of us."

As a matter of fact, Joan was wrong. He liked Bertie the least of them, if a least were possible.

Bertie said: "Cecil, you'll be seeing him some time to-day. You can ask him then. I'm playing tennis."

"Ground's too wet," said Cecil. "*You* ask him. What's the objection? He's always polite enough when he comes up here."

But although they all agreed that they must have a key to the gate, and that the Cavalliere had no legal nor moral right to withhold it, and that the request was extremely reasonable, and that their landlord was the very soul of courtesy, yet they all seemed to shy, with a queer dislike, from the job of actually approaching him on the subject. They were, indeed, fathoms away from actually guessing all the poetry and the passion of the Italian boy's infatuation. To them, he was simply a bit fussy about his rotten old road; and Joan, who was the wag of the party, made them all shout with laughter, by accusing Bertie of having dropped a pencil on it, dimpling its smoothness. But they smelt the fanatic somewhere, somehow; and being well-balanced people themselves, the suggestion upset their tranquillity.

"I'll tell you what!" exclaimed Bertie. "Sonia's coming to-morrow, isn't she? Well, we'll turn young Sonia on to him!"

They all agreed in chorus that young Sonia should be turned on. The gate was as good as unlocked already. They had immense faith in Sonia.

Phil Bryant slowly blushed. He did everything slowly. He had apparently met Sonia once, and: "I tell you what, Dawkins," he remarked with emphasis, "that girl simply sends my old pulse up to a hundred-and-twenty. And that's not impossible, mark you! I once knew a fellow . . ."

"Raining again?" cried Mrs. Dawkins. "Well, well! Raining again!"

"Aha!" gloated Roméo. "The gate has taught them! They have been taught. Benissimo!"

And beyond the heavy bars of wood, the road wound sacrosanct; and the sun shone down upon its emptiness. . . .

His road. . . . In his dreams, in his etherealised conception of it, he did not see it being used at all, not solidly and sordidly

for carts, driven by peasants, and piled high with a precarious load of stuff for buying and selling. But he envisioned it as a road whose own beauty was its sole use. Other roads were for all men, but this one he owned, and no one might use it save with his permission. How white it was! And how gold in the sunset! How gracefully it coiled and swayed, subtly bending its form to the shape of the hill! In his vision of it, it was a road without end, even as it was a road without use. It ran on and on, over the hills, and down into the valleys. . . .

And sometimes, again, it appeared to him as one of the great roads of history; and through half-closed eyes he could see Hannibal and his elephants treading their way along it; or great armies, wearing coats of burnished steel; or processions in which women were gowned and furred for some exquisite revelry, and men were tall and laughing, and their cloaks swung proudly from their shoulders. And though they passed along his road, and over it, these horses and carriages and elephants, yet they never dented it, nor left any mark. For it seemed rather as though they were treading without weight, over taut velvet. . . . A golden haze drifted down and enveloped them, and when it cleared, the road was once more shining and empty. Perhaps that was how he loved it best, for then it seemed most his.

* * * * *

It did not begin to rain again until after dinner the following day.

But then it rained with tropical violence, like flung spears upon the ground. "What a night for Sonia to arrive!" said Mrs. Dawkins. "Are you going to walk to the station, Bertie? Is Cecil going too? Dear, dear, you *will* both get wet!"

The mule-track was a running rivulet, and the trees added their dripping quota from overhead. But Bertie and Cecil were wearing their oilskins, and did not really mind. They were glad Sonia was coming to stay with them. Sonia was very popular with the Dawkins family.

"Bet you the train'll be late, on a night like this!"

Bertie answered gloomily: "I wonder the lights haven't failed yet."

And at that exact moment the lights did fail, all over the village, and in every house. The lakeside inhabitants were resigned to this happening, whenever the rain was especially heavy.

Sonia's train, due at nine-forty-five,

proudly draw its burden of carriages into the pitch-black station at eleven-ten.

"You darlings!" cried Sonia, leaping on to the platform and into the welcoming arms of Bertie and Cecil. "*What* a night! You can't even see how much prettier I've grown. Yes, I've got masses of luggage. It's all up at the back, somewhere—or was it in front? I forget. I say, I thought the sun always shone in Italy?"

"Not usually after 11 p.m.!" laughed Bertie. "But it's been simply foul weather this spring. No bathing yet, and the roads are in a horrid mess."

They chartered a carriage, and piled most of Sonia's lighter luggage on to it, as well as Sonia herself, leaving the heavy trunks to follow the next day. There was no room for Bertie and Cecil, so they followed quickly on foot, quite forgetting, in the excitement of the arrival, to warn either the driver or Sonia herself of the absurd impediment to progress, at the foot of the hill.

Emmanuelo pulled up his horses with a jerk, and Sonia was thrown, with painful suddenness, against the corner of her hat-box. Emmanuelo came round to the door of the carriage, and talked and gesticulated for several moments, with shouts of amusement. He had a very strong sense of the comical. Sonia only knew that it was very dark, that the roof of the carriage was leaking, so that splashes of cold rain dripped upon her shoulders; that she was hungry and thirsty and tired, and wanted to get home, and that her hunger was not of the kind that could be satisfied even by the rich garlic contained in the breath of an Italian coachman. Why didn't the man go on?

The misunderstanding continued for several moments before he was able to enlighten her by going forward to shake the gate and rattle the padlock. The girl peered out, and could dimly see the obstruction. How queer of the Dawkins boys to have said nothing! What was she to do, alone in a soaked, black world? Could the gate be locked? She alighted herself and tried it impatiently. Yes, it was locked. Then she saw, a little way above it, the shadowy outline of a house. Perhaps that was a sort of lodge, and they had the key there? Her play of gesture was very supple, so that she was able to indicate to Emmanuelo her brilliant notion, that he should arouse the inmates of the house and ask them to open the gate, that she and her luggage might drive through.

Emmanuelo shrugged his shoulders. He had no illusion about Cavalliere de la Torre's residence in relation to the Dawkins' hired villa on top of the hill; but still, he groped his way to the front-door, and began banging and shouting. Presently, after what seemed to Sonia, peering anxiously from the murky inside of the carriage, a very long interval, the shutters of an upper window were flung back, and a voice cried angrily: "*Cosa vuole? What do you want?*"

Emmanuelo responded with a beseeching flood, which she interpreted as a plea for the gate to be opened. She began to get furious. Why couldn't that chattering booby up there come down quickly and release her from her predicament? Sonia was used to the service of men.

"Can you speak English?" she called out. "I say, hurry up and come down and open this gate, will you? I've been waiting about for hours. Or if you're undressed already, chuck us down the key."

—And then Roméo fairly let himself go! Partly in English, partly in Italian, with oaths and with cries to heaven, he made clear to this impertinent person—he could not see her, it was too dark; but she was obviously English, and a visitor to the Dawkins family, so she partook of their sins—that he had no intention of coming down at this time of night, to open any gate whatsoever. It was late; he had been asleep. Why could not people arrive at a reasonable time? It was not his business if the trains were late—Dio, no! Nor would he throw down the key, nor allow the gate to be opened. If she had politely requested, perhaps—but her imperious summons worked upon him like wax upon a flame. He imagined that she was despising him as a mere boy. He writhed and he spluttered. She could walk up the mule-track, yes—or she could stay below. Ecco!

"Don't be silly and rude," retorted Sonia, "even if it is your gate. I don't care whose gate it is. I can't possibly walk up. I've got a whole lot of luggage here in the carriage."

And this was the climax, and the end of altercation; for if de la Torre had been unwilling to allow a lightly weighted carriage to roll up over the spongy, squelching surface of his road, how much less likely would he be, to allow a carriage weighted down with heavy luggage?

"No, no, no, no—eempossible! Via,

Emmanuelo! Go! I care not how the luggage gets up. Basta!"

The shutters were slammed to again. The walls of the house were blank and silent. The gate remained locked. . . . "*Beast!*" cried Sonia.

And then Bertie and Cecil joined her, and she poured out her wrongs to them, and they heartily abused Roméo de la Torre and his road and his padlocks. And then Emmanuelo and Bertie and Cecil between them loaded themselves miserably with Sonia's luggage; and Sonia herself picked up her handbag and her sunshade, and stepped daintily out of her haven into the rain, and shuddered with disgust as she felt the flowing mule-track lapping round her suède shoes and dainty silk ankles.

. . . And they all plodded slowly upwards.

III.

"THIS time," fumed the Cavalliere, the next morning, "nothing, *nothing* will prevent me from telling them about it! I will make them a devil-of-a-row!" What—to wake him at midnight—well, nearly midnight, drag him out of bed, and, without apology, demand that he should come down and open the gate, so that a carriage with a heavy load of luggage and visitors might drag its devastating wounds across the delicate bloom of his road? And in the rain, too! "*Body of Bacchus!*" Raging, the Cavalliere went up the mule-track. This time, no drinks, no fellowship, no slappings on the back should propitiate him. The Dawkins family should hear at last what he thought of them. Trembling with the intensity of his desire to vent his wrath and his grievance, he did not wait for the answer to his rap, but hurled himself into the hall, and on to the now sunlit verandah. . . .

Then—

. . . "*Scusi, scusi!*" murmured Roméo de la Torre.

Swifter than the fall of an apple from a tree, he had fallen in love.

. . . He was rapt. He was inarticulate. Anger melted from him, and slipped away like snow in the scorching rays of the sun. His limbs became boneless; his tongue loosely knotted a few incoherent phrases, such as: "I did not know—but pardon. . . . Scusi! Mille pardons—but thank you—I beg—no, please. De la Torre, de la Torre," introducing himself with several jerky bows. "If I had known—if I can do—Please, please. . . ."

He was in a pitiful condition.

She was very tall, this girl, and very slim and golden; like a beautiful Antinous, with her short fair hair tumbling over her forehead and round her cheeks, curling a little; her gay narrow eyes were set slantwise above her cheeks' seductive bloom, faint as the powdering on a freshly gathered nectarine. Accepting Roméo as a contemporary, she was not in the least shy, but at once became frank and confidential with him, as though to her no silly boundaries existed between strangers and old friends. She said that her name was Sonia, and that she had arrived last night. . . .

And the Cavalliere collapsed.

"So—it was you?" he stammered. Life became a black horror. It was this divine creature whom he had insulted, whom he had compelled to walk, carrying her luggage, up the steep mule-track, on a dark rainy night. Did destiny loathe him, to have prompted his one childish display of bad manners and bad temper to burst forth at his very first encounter with Sonia? A meeting which should have been all flowers and prancings and laboured compliments? Had he but known—had he but known. . . . And suddenly he hated the road, his road, for having been the cause of his wild act of self-destruction.

He began to apologise for his conduct of the night before. It was a marvellous performance; Sonia would not have missed it for worlds. She compared it afterwards to the liquid fall of syrup from a spoon, sticky but transparent, undulating and curvetting into a wonderful complication of arabesques. An English youth would have said, "*Great Scot!* If I'd known what you were *like* . . .," and left it at that. Sonia was amused. Sonia was cruel. She allowed the Cavalliere to writhe in abasement for quite a long time, before, metaphorically speaking, she gave him a shake and set him on his feet again.

She was glad, for several reasons, to see the effect she had produced. The least of these reasons, however, was revenge for his treatment of her the night before. Sonia had a forgiving nature, and the memory of her spoilt shoes did not rankle. But then the Dawkins family had challenged her to use her power and charm away that exasperating gate at the foot of the hill: "*Bet you can't do it, Sonia. He's simply a sulky, obstinate baby about anything that affects his precious road; always afraid that we may leave a footprint on it, and*

that he'll have to pay to get it repaired!"—which was an aspect of the matter wholly unfair to the tall young visionary and idealist, who had loved his road as some men love the mountain peaks, and some men their country, and some their collections of etchings or Venetian glass, and some lovers their brides.

disdainful; then again quick with her friendship, with her sidelong caressing glances, her open-hearted avowals of all that Sonia wanted for Sonia, to make Sonia's life pleasant. At moments, he thought that she singled him out especially for her favour; but then again he became despondent, and noticed her equally



"'By Jove!' exclaimed Phil. 'What's that mad youngster doing now?'"

Sonia was enough of a schoolgirl to take a dare. Moreover, she had, as previously stated, her reasons, and also her one special and private reason, for not desiring a stout gate stretched across the road at the foot of the hill. So that the next few days were, to the Cavalliere, a dazzle of torment mingled with ecstasy. Now she laughed; now she teased; now she was casual or

debonair liking for Cecil, for Bertie, for Phil Bryant—nay, for Joan, or Mrs. Dawkins. Pretty Sonia kept her affection spinning so impartially from one to another, that almost before you ran to pick it up, the next candidate had a temporary hold of it.

But he was most jealous of Phil; because of Phil's superiority in age and military experience, and because of all the hours

that Sonia spent in sitting with him, at one of the two little rickety tin tables outside the Grande Café di Europea Santa Justina, sipping coloured liquids, and allowing him eternal leisure in which to expand from that opening: "I once knew a fellow who . . .," so brusquely discouraged in the Dawkins' home circle.

life? Why, Sonia *was* continental life, all its gaiety and chatter and evanescence, as she sat there with her sunshade—"I like that sunshade," said Phil, every time he saw it; "it's rather a jolly colour. What colour, exactly, would you call those sort of flowers and whirligigs on it? No—wait—don't tell me! Let me see. . . . *Don't* tell me!" he implored, almost passionately. "I'm one of those chaps who like to find things out for themselves. Now, *I* should call those flowers a sort of ripe-raspberry colour. . . ." He was triumphant at this discovery. A white silk sunshade, with pale green stripes, and the little flowers and whirligigs were ripe-raspberry colour. These were the symbols. His dream had



"He was bare-throated; sleeves rolled up; gallant knight performing a votive act, lay heaped and scattered

wearing leather breeches. . . . His appearance that of a He swung the axe himself. . . . Already most of the wood on the road about him."

Phil was very, very happy. He had scarcely any need to dwell carefully in the extreme centre of his illusion, without stepping beyond its limits. The illusion had wider boundaries, now, and was of stouter and firmer stuff altogether. Continental

materialised at last—a pretty girl sitting opposite him, bright blue skies—yes, even the weather had cleared at last, and was warm and benign. . . . What matter that his old heart and his old lungs seemed rather more dicky every day?

—"I like this sort of lazy, cosmopolitan life, don't you?" said Phil to Sonia. "Sitting out here with the lake in front, you know, and being able to have your drink comfortably, and sort of watch the people at the same time. You can't do it in England. They don't know how; but it sort of suits *me*."

And then, confidentially leaning forward, his eyes round and solemn and a little surprised, he told her, in slow simple phrases, about the café game. Of course, he did not call it that. But this was how he played it:

You began by calling yourself a cosmopolitan. You went on to pretend that you were a man of leisure, and that you liked to sit, slowly sipping your liqueur, at one of the innumerable little green tables on the promenade outside a café, and to watch the crowds go by. It was so interesting and amusing to do this, that you made a habit of it. The crowds looked so gay, and the sun was shining, and the lake was very blue, and the striped canvas awnings and umbrellas over the tables, so bright and jaunty; and you were part of it, too, and at the same time a tolerant spectator. . . . There was always something amusing to be observed in a crowd. You called for another liqueur. . . . Presently, perhaps, you became a well-known figure. . . . You would be pointed out . . . as thus, for instance: "Yes, he always comes down at this time, and sits there, and has his two drinks. Then he gets up and pays, and drives home." It was all so . . . so *cosmopolitan*! And Captain Philip Carfax Bryant, who had been in sundry dangerous expeditions and campaigns the whole world over, and was now in the last stages of his endurance and vitality, felt indeed that he might die, that his old breath might really fail and give out at last, if he could not go every day down to the one café in the dull little town, and sit at one of the two rickety tables which stood outside, order his drinks, with a pernickety air, and then lean back to watch the two or three dingy people who occasionally straggled past. These were the stage properties of his illusion; these were his toys, that he could build up into that glamorous fabric of gaiety and continental life. . . .

So he played his café game!

"I know—oh, I *do* know!" cried Sonia, ceasing, for the moment, to be a minx. "And it wouldn't be a bit the same, for instance, if you sometimes missed out a day, or went to a different café, or had three

drinks instead of two. Or if you played dominoes, instead of watching the passers-by, or read the newspapers. *They* can, but not you. It must all have the same clicking movements, like a little brightly-coloured mechanical toy. Even my sunshade. . . ."

But she noticed that he coughed a lot during his narration. And she mentioned this to the Cavalliere, next time they were alone together. "Why do you always scowl so," she asked, "when you open the gates for poor old Phil to drive up to the house with me?"

"Why should he drive?" expostulated Phil's rival, unleashing his hot resentment. "He is a man. A man can walk."

"But he's ill!" cried Sonia.

"If he is a seek-man, he can stay at home. I do not think he is so seek, or he would not want to go every day, every day, every day, down to the café."

The girl's eyes were a little misty. "I don't believe you're old enough to understand. . . ." she began. Then quickly altered her tactics: "I wonder," coaxingly, "if you'd be nice—really nice and generous, and lend me—me, you know; it needn't be the others!—another key to your gate? It's an awfully fine gate, and I think it looks splendid just where you've had it built—so commanding and feudal, with you looking down on it from your house, like a baron from your castle; fortifications and battlements and things," went on Sonia, winding him softly in a web of words and admiration, crooning his critical faculty to sleep. "But you know, it does please poor old Phil when I go down with him to the town, and have drinks; and he really seems to me not quite so well as he was, even a week ago. He ought to drive both ways. If you lent me a key, then you and I could arrange it just between ourselves."

Thus, that rogue Sonia included him into the delicious atmosphere of a secret shared between them. Not for the Famiglia-Dawkeens was her preference, so her tone conveyed; and not for poor old Phil either, though she was sorry for him; but for the lordly young Cavalliere, who held keys and commanded gates. He was conscious of a tremulous sense that his fortune and his luck were very near their zenith; and that by one supreme flourish, one moment of grand display, Sonia would be his! He gave her a look suffused with meaning. . . . "Wait!" he said. "Ah, yes, you are right. Awfully na-ece! But wait. . . ."

And when she drove back from the town with Phil, the day after: "By Jove!" exclaimed Phil. "What's that mad youngster doing now?"

For Roméo de la Torre was hewing down his gate.

He was bare-throated; sleeves rolled up; wearing leather breeches. . . . His appearance that of a gallant knight performing a votive act. He swung the axe himself—no henchman should be allowed to share in the splendid sacrifice. Already most of the wood lay heaped and scattered on the road about him.

"You will excuse," he said, pausing, his weapon of destruction still uplifted, his gesture dramatic, his courtesy profound: "You will excuse, but I fear that just this day the carriage cannot pass. If it will not incommode you to walk—Mille scusi! A thousand pardons! After to-day"—he spread his arms wide—"the road is clear!"

"But what's the idea?" inquired Phil. "What are you cutting it down for?"

It was the cue the Cavalliere required. Not for him, the little simple services of devotion which are performed silently, and in the dark. He was a Latin; and he believed in the beau geste. Sonia was looking at him, and:

"I had need of fire-wood!" replied Roméo de la Torre magnificently.

IV.

THE peroration of his gallantry proved too much for the weather. It broke almost at once.

The rain had not been sluicing down for more than half an hour, when the Cavalliere, sitting in his study, mechanically doing accounts, and at the same time concocting the speech in which he should presently—soon—to-day—ask Sonia to be his wife, was interrupted in his double performance by a most incredible sound, that first blended with the steady drumming upon the roof and against the window-panes . . . then suddenly swelled to a roar, a great pounding of wheels, the throb of powerful engines, the scream of a horn . . .

Something long and lean and aluminium flashed past his window, and up the road. . . .

It died away again. Roméo rushed out on to the balcony, just in time to hear the jar and grind of brakes applied too suddenly, as the big 40-120 h.p. racer pulled up with

locked wheels, in front of the house on top of the hill.

"How's that for a climber?" cried Dick Kyndersley triumphantly, as Sonia and the Dawkins family, followed more slowly by Captain Bryant, rushed down the garden path to meet him. "I came up that hill, bend and all, at forty, and pulled her up, standing, in ten yards—fifteen, anyway! And on this imitation cart-track you call a road, too! She's a thoroughbred! Only just bought her, at Milan. I got rid of my twelve-horse Trumpeter—" And, indeed, that seemed to be the only trumpeter that Dick *had* got rid of; for he bragged on excitedly about his new purchase, and all that she could accomplish, his eyes seeking Sonia all the time, claiming her approbation.

—Little boys at their games. . . .

Sonia had been sorry for Phil, and amused by Roméo de la Torre. But she sparkled on Dick. Dick was undoubtedly the conqueror. She gloried in being the girl chosen to sit beside him, while he recklessly tore about the country in that crouching, rushing monster, which was at once his exacting idol and his toy. And almighty Phaethon! How he showed off! How he went up and down that hill—"There was a gate in the way, before," remarked Sonia; "but I had it pulled down for you, directly you wrote you were coming!"—never slackening speed for the bend, turning and reversing when he reached the summit, until the yielding road was cut into as many strips as a dish of soft macaroni. Dick had no consideration but for his own splendour and achievement; and, indeed, it never occurred to him that consideration was required. He was very confident and very handsome, and he had a new car; and Sonia—Sonia was so gay, and so pretty, and so entirely fearless. . . . They had simply a top-hole time!

And after a few days' lingering at Santa Justinia, she consented to let him drive her to Florence, where she was to join her people. It was all right, because they were practically engaged.

"Oh, it's all *right*!" said Phil Bryant gloomily, explaining this to Roméo de la Torre, as they sat together at one of the two rickety tin tables, outside the Grande Café di Europea Santa Justinia. The Cavalliere had inexplicably taken to joining him there, regularly, of late, since Sonia had deserted them both; and they had had drinks together, and talked disparagingly

of the new arrival in the Famiglia-Dawkeens' house-party; in spite of the discrepancy of their years, they each drew a queer, melancholy comfort from this companionship in affliction.

"You say it is all right, yes," replied the Cavalliere, equally gloomily. "But I do not know what this means—this 'practically engaged'?" And he added, with a flash of sardonic jesting: "I should call it rather, I, *unpractically* engaged! Here in Italy we are practical, yes. Our betrothals, they are serious, they are meant to last. I do *not* think he is awful-ly na-eece, this English fellow with his big car!"

"Oh, he's all *right*!" said Phil again, loyal to his nation, and detesting Dick Kyndersley. "Shall we go now?" The lake was grey, and a cool, drizzling rain spotted the water. He did not seem to fancy his drink this morning; too sweet. His old cough was bothering him. . . . And he remembered gaiety, and deep blue skies, and a white silk parasol with green stripes and raspberry-coloured sort of flowers on it, outside a cosmopolitan café. . . .

"I will follow you later," Roméo said. "I must see a man about a business, and I prefer to walk. But I will call you a carriage, yes? It is bad for what you call your 'old heart,' to walk up that mule-track." He touched Phil Bryant on the shoulder, in an odd mood of protective tenderness. . . . A seek man. . . . And he himself was so strong. . . .

* * * * *

The Cavalliere was just about to turn in at the gate of his house, when he heard again that odious hum and throb, familiar now, from the top of the hill. . . . It

swelled into a deafening clamour of engine and wheel and horn, as the great aluminium racer, driven by Dick, Sonia beside him and her luggage piled at the back, flashed at top-speed round the bend, thundered towards him. . . . and then reluctantly slowed up, to allow one of his carts to draw to one side. The pause was enough to show him that Sonia was looking more bewitching than ever; enough, too, to allow him to hear Dick remark to her: "Of course, a foul road like this is simply the ruin of a decent car!"

The cart was out of the way. Dick accelerated, and darted past. . . . The pounding died down to a drone, and they were gone.

. . . Roméo de la Torre did not go into his house, after all. As though in a trance, he walked slowly up the road—or what was left of the road. It was his fault. . . . He had suffered it to lie defenceless under the wheels of the enemy, and this was what they had done to it! And yet, for all his sense of soreness, of being deluded and abandoned, his possessions mocked at, he was just beginning to be conscious of a faint gladness that they were once more left to themselves, he and his road. He had deserted his first love, but he could make amends. And he thought he might spare old Beppo for half a day—no, for a whole day, the week after next—no, no, next week, to work on it. . . .

. . . He bent down, and tried, in a futile sort of way, to straighten out a bit of rut with his bare hands.

And, slowly, out of remorse and a longing to prove it by penance, the great decision was born:

"Per'aps—for a week—a steam-roller. . . ."

IN LONDON.

IN London some things are so cheap
That London's angel oft must weep;
And other things there are so dear
You cannot buy them with a tear,
Nor buy them either with your gold;
They are not to be bought or sold.
In London town some things there are
That dim for man his Morning star;
And yet in London's many a thing
That sets a man to worshipping.

LÆTITIA WITHALL.



"Patience Tuppen was a big young woman, with cool grey eyes like a storm-sky."

THE TRADE SECRET

By MRS. HENRY DUDENEY

ILLUSTRATED BY T. H. ROBINSON

PATIENCE TUPPEN was hanging up washing in the orchard.

She was a big young woman, with cool grey eyes like a storm-sky. They looked out with vague content at the world, and sometimes when she stared at you and when she moved so slowly, Aunt Ann would snap out, yet without ill-humour:

"You're like a great Alderney cow."

For Aunt Ann was a little, aquiline, quick woman who seemed hung up on wires; and Patience fidgeted her.

This was blossom-time. The orchard was a witchery of pink and white. The loaded, leaning trees were apples, of old sorts—

Strawberry Pippins, Cumberines, Cockle Pippins, Dewsons and the red Quarrendens. You must have "sweets" for cider-making.

Then there were Codlins, for dumplings, winter-time. And the Cumberine was a pretty apple when it was laid out in the attic upon meadow hay to ripen.

Patience was thinking about all this, as she pegged out the clothes she had washed. And blossom-time was beautiful, but what she loved best in the world was making cider in the autumn. The cider-press groaned when you turned the wooden screw; and then came the trickle of juice into the tub.

One year they got twenty-three bushels

of apples from one tree. Another year she had caught some boys slipping through the hedge to take a swig of her cider when her back was turned. And her palm tingled now when she remembered how she'd clouted the boy that she caught.

Life here in the old cottage, which was the home laundry of the Hall, had been pleasant. Toil for her body, vision for her soul! Patience had these.

Indoors, everything had been bustling, shrill, capable. There they had been, she and Aunt Ann; in the great laundry with the red floor and the lime-washed walls; with the coppers of boiling water and the steam and the suds; the scrubbing, sorting, wringing.

And sometimes you could slip into the orchard to think your own thoughts!

Aunt Ann, through the latticed window, would watch Patience in the orchard and, nodding her head, she'd say to herself:

"Thinking of Jim Buckman, that I'll warrant."

But Patience was not thinking of him nor of any man.

What pretty work on ironing days, when you did the fine things! Patience loved that warm smell; with sometimes the added sniff of a burnt rag—if the iron-holder caught. And the iron-holder was the only thing that ever did scorch, for Aunt Ann was a wonderful laundress, as her mother had been before her, and as Patience would be after her—and always in this place.

She had a tale which had terrified Patience, when she was small. In the good old times there had been some careless girl who had burned a dress-shirt to tinder and got hanged for it at Horsham.

"And that's the Gospel fact," concluded Aunt Ann with grim emphasis. Patience never knew whether she believed this tale or not, but it kept its unfailing thrill.

* * * * *

She was hanging up the washing in the orchard when the postman came. As she walked to the gate, down the flower border, between the fat peonies and the dangling, subtle columbine bells, she looked beyond the hedge and across the park at the Hall with its burly chimney-stacks. She thought of the old Squire and his family. They had left the place, for they could not afford to keep it up. New rich folk from London had it and were very seldom here. They had made their money—and plenty of it.

"Not born gentry," said Aunt Ann

astringently. She drew a clear line between making your money and inheriting it.

"And no heart," continued Aunt Ann. "They don't understand your feelings. Like as not, they think you haven't got any."

In the old Squire's time, how comfortable and friendly and splendid everything had been! Sometimes when the house was full, Patience and her aunt would go up to help in the kitchen, where everything was bustling, chattering, generous.

And, as she went to the postman at the gate, Patience could not say why she was thinking so fast; and of lots of things.

He gave her the letter. It came from London and was addressed to her aunt. But she opened it, for everything was on her shoulders now.

She opened it and read. Then she looked down the road at the postman, who was whizzing along on his red-painted bicycle. She thought slowly and with bitterness that postmen were terrible. Bill Adams had said to her cheerfully, "Nice morning, Patience!" and had given her the letter and ridden off. But he did not know what he had done. She went back to the orchard, leaned heavily against a tree—for in trees she could always find comfort—and said to it, sobbing:

"We've got the sack."

She read the letter again. It was from the new tenant at the Hall, and it curtly gave Aunt Ann three months' notice.

"Tuppens have been here, as a family, close on eighty years," said Patience to the tree.

She was bewildered, broken, her calm mind fell into ruins.

At last she looked, through the lovely apple-blossom, at Aunt Ann's bedroom window, which was closely shut and curtained.

"We've got the sack, and I know why," she said, with quiet fury—and found slow, insurgent anger rising in her. For she was beginning to realise what this letter meant. She was driving the stark fact of their dismissal into her head, as she'd drive a bung into a cider barrel.

It meant that they must leave here. It meant that she would lose this orchard and never make cider any more. It meant that there was nothing to do and nowhere to go. And she knew why.

Slow, insurgent anger rose in her, and she stared at the sick woman's shut window.

Aunt Ann, the day that she was taken ill, had been ironing a wonderful linen dress, which had come from Paris and cost pounds (so the lady's maid said).

Suddenly, she clapped the iron down, called out and then fell. Patience found her, and by that time the iron had burned through the linen to the ironing blanket. And the frock was ruined.

A hundred years ago—perhaps—a girl had been hanged for burning a dress-shirt! To-day an old woman of seventy-four was to be homeless because she had ruined a frock.

Patience thought this as she walked into the house and got her aunt's dinner and took it upstairs.

It had always been tiresome, carrying a tray up those twisty old stairs, but to-day it was torture. And she dared not speak to Aunt Ann or look at her. She could only hope that she would die before the three months was up.

"Wouldn't hurt me," said the old woman, speaking thickly, "to have the window open a crack."

"Do you good."

Patience put down the tray and hooked back the lattice.

"Nice to hear the wryneck calling 'Peel, peel, peel,'" said Aunt Ann. "And I reckon Jim Buckman, he's busy in the coop."

She looked waggishly at Patience, with a white neck and a loose knot of reddish hair, standing there by the window.

Patience, with her turn-up nose a little redder than her cheeks, was not pretty, thought Aunt Ann, but she was healthy and would make a good wife. She would live happy here, with Jim Buckman. Aunt Ann had it all worked out in her head.

Yet Patience, turning round and coming to the bed, seemed sulky. She was a funny girl and not the sweethearting sort.

"I wonder," said Aunt Ann meaningly, "what will happen to you when I'm gone? I lay and worry."

"You're not gone. You're getting better," said Patience stoutly lied. "So don't you be an old silly. Doctor said to me yesterday—"

"Doctors ain't undertakers, dear. They'll always say you're getting better. And you've been busy, ain't you? I love the smell of warm suds coming up the stairs."

Patience was propping her with pillows, pinning a napkin under her chin and slowly feeding her. And she was looking at her, wondering desperately how long she would last. For she did not now wish her to live. She dared not let her live. The aquiline old face was still eager, the grey eyes were

brightly acute; but the hands were dead-looking and swollen—hands that never any more would lustily wring a sheet. Aunt Ann's body was finished, over, done with; but her spirit had become more luminous.

"You'll be doing a bit of clear starching this afternoon," she said when the meal was over and the tray taken away.

"Perhaps I will; but there isn't much to starch."

"You're right." The thin lip curled towards the beaked nose.

"There's not much fine cambric and real lace nowadays. It's all this silk lin-ger-ee. And gentlemen wear flannel. I've heard my mother talk, times and often, about the pleated shirt-fronts and the frills. A rare job to gaufer; but it was delicate work, and work to do you credit. Don't s'pose I'll ever stand at the ironing-board again, Patience."

"'Course you will. Think I can do all that lot of work alone!"

The girl was robust and she looked quickly away. For she was afraid of those things that her eyes might be saying.

"This place," said Aunt Ann very slowly, with increasing difficulty, "ain't our freehold, Patience. We've been here, Tuppens have, close on eighty year. But we're servants; that's all."

"Very likely"—Patience was calm—"but we've never looked at it that way. No call to. And what's put such thoughts into your head?"

"We'd no call to, so long as the old family was at the Hall. But look at this new lady. She's never been nigh me since I took bad."

"Don't suppose she knows you're ill. They're all in London. The laundry goes up and down."

"She's got no heart, Patience; that woman."

"You're wrong there, Aunt. I've heard different. She's quick-tempered and she's spoiled. But she's generous and she never forgets a kindness. The lady's maid told me that. Once you do her a good turn, she's your friend for life."

"Tch!" clicked Aunt Ann painfully. "How can our class be friends with her class? And you'd say a good word for the devil, wouldn't you?"

Patience, always just and always obstinate, persisted.

"Well, she may be one to take offence, but—"

"Who's given her offence? We haven't done nothing, have we?"

Aunt Ann asked this very swiftly ; she seemed troubled—as if she half remembered something.

She repeated, trying to move her head and she could not, for she had lost all movement except the movement of her tongue and her eyes :

“ We ain’t given offence, have we, dear ? ”

“ Of course not. And don’t you talk so much. You try and get to sleep, and I’ll go back to the laundry.”

“ No, you stay. I want to talk to you, while I can talk. Laying here alone, I worry, and some things don’t keep clear. I’ve forgot—and you won’t help me to remember, Patience. But it isn’t likely, after all, that the woman would send her beautiful things to a steam laundry. I went over one of them places once, just for fun. The machinery they’ve got—well, you wouldn’t believe, unless you’d seen it. Everything going round like a flail. Wonder to me that a rag comes out alive.”

She tried to laugh and then she said very mournfully, with tears in her grey eyes :

“ I’ll never laugh no more, nor yet work.”

There was silence in the room. From the copse came the wryneck calling, “ Peel, peel, peel.”

“ Kill me to go into a little house.”

“ You ain’t asked to.” Patience was quick—for her.

“ You could build one of they new cottages, back-yard and all, under the spread of our Cockle Pippin down there.” The old woman was scornful. “ And don’t you ever cut down the Cockle Pippin, or you’ll be sorry. There’s no feeling in my fingers, but you hold my hand, all the same.”

So Patience took that helpless hand, which was crinkled and puffy with a lifetime at the wash-tub.

“ When my mother was a young married woman the Squire’s wife had a christening robe, hundreds of years old, bought in some foreign place and with a big ugly stain on it. And nothing would move that stain ; they’re dirty creatures, them foreigners. But mother, she found the way to get it out, and that’s our trade secret, Patience. We could make our fortune with that, but we’ve never troubled.

“ Mother kept the secret to herself, same as I do. I’ve always locked myself up in the pantry when I took out a stain, as you very well know. Mother told me on her death-bed, so I’m going to tell you.”

Patience did not speak, but her warm

hand jumped convulsively on that cold one which had no feeling at all.

“ We all—no matter who we are—like to feel we got something that nobody else has got,” Aunt Ann continued, with a calm, detached grin across her fallen mouth.

“ And I always tried to squint through the crack when mother was taking out stains, but you’ve never cared nor asked questions. You ain’t curious.”

“ No.” The girl looked at her oddly.

“ But I’ve been happy.”

“ Who ain’t happy—doing their duty, Patience ? And now you listen to me, and you mind that you remember.”

But Patience sprang up ; she twisted herself from the bed, went to the window and burst out crying.

“ I won’t listen, Aunt Ann. What’s the good of a trade secret to me ? Once you’re gone, I’ll never have the heart to stand over the wash-tub again.”

“ Don’t you be a silly girl. And don’t you make a fuss, for it upsets me.” The old woman was fond. “ I’ll tell you tea-time. I can’t talk no more now ; makes the side of my tongue ache and he feels too big for my mouth.”

So Patience went away and the next time she came to the bedroom Aunt Ann was speechless.

* * * * *

A week later, and come home from the funeral, she remembered those anxious grey eyes that had stared so mutely from the bed, through those last days. They had been trying to talk ; for Aunt Ann had died with the trade secret untold and heavily on her mind.

What did it matter—old ways, old secrets ? Patience asked herself this, standing alone in the house, home from the funeral. And she knew that she would be left alone, as she wished. In her determined fashion, she had said to the neighbours that they must keep away for a bit.

“ For I couldn’t stand their clack,” she said, moving restlessly from the laundry to the living-room ; into the pantry and then back. Then she went upstairs, to Aunt Ann’s bare, newly scoured bedroom. She was not afraid ; this place quieted her.

She looked out of the window and saw Bill Adams, the postman, come in at the gate. When she went down, he gave her a parcel and she signed for it.

This time he did not speak ; he only looked at her with rather scared sympathy. For Patience was a funny girl, the neigh-

bours said. You never knew how to take her.

The parcel came from London. It was registered and addressed to Miss Patience Tuppen. She opened it. Inside was a letter from the lady at the Hall, and also a cloth, long and narrow, exquisitely fine, yellow with age and trimmed with lace.

It was the most beautiful bit of linen that Patience had ever seen, but it was spoiled by a large purplish stain in the middle. She read the letter, which, beginning with polite regrets at the death of Aunt Ann, continued, with quite beseeching detail, to talk about the cloth.

It was a piece of church linen, Italian, of the sixteenth century. It had been to a cleaner's and the stain had not come out. It had been to a steam laundry and the stain had spread.

A steam laundry! Patience, all goose-fleshy, seemed to hear a voice, thick and amused, sound in the room:

"Going round like a flail. And I wonder a rag comes out alive!"

The cloth was wanted for use at a most important dinner-party. If Miss Tuppen could get out the stain and return the cloth to-morrow, the lady at the Hall very much hoped that she would ignore the notice to leave and stay on in her old home, for as long as ever she liked.

The letter concluded quite warmly. Oh—Patience knew! Hadn't the lady's maid told her? This was a woman who wanted her own way. And—if she got it—then you were safe.

She stood with the cloth in her hands and her eyes looking out at the orchard. And she thought of the trade secret, never told. Aunt Ann had taken it with her to that blissful, very comfortable place which Patience piously called Heaven.

Terror and delight had hold of her as she looked at the ugly stain, its origin lost in the centuries. If she could get that out, she might stay, here in the place where she had always been and loved to be—or, the place where Tuppens had lived for eighty years.

If she could get out that stain, then she would be making cider, come the autumn. She would be turning the wooden screw, listening to apple-juice running, ladling it out afterwards—straining, bottling, corking, sealing!

In the crisp autumn twilight, in the smell of rotting leaves and ripened fruit, all alone—there she would be, and as happy as a queen.

But the trade secret was deep in a grave and she only had a few hours in which to find out what it was.

If she did not—what then? The sombre thought came quite steadily: if she did not, then she would kill herself. For she'd far rather die than leave this place.

And then, in a minute, she was frightened of her thoughts, and frightened of this new Patience Tuppen—strange and wicked—who had taken to popping up.

She presently went into the pantry, foolishly locking the door, although the house was empty and although she knew that nobody would dare come to her to-day.

She was murmuring: "Salts of lemon won't be any good. First thing they'd try. And milk—well, that's nothing but foolishness for an old stain."

With exceeding desperation she looked at that stain and felt it. She made herself feel sick with the musty smell of it.

And then she thought that she would go upstairs and rummage among Aunt Ann's clothes; for she might find something to help her: in the corner of an old pocket, or in the corner of a drawer. But although she had not been afraid of standing idly in the bare room—but had been comforted—she was afraid to touch things, in case Aunt Ann, very brisk and shrill, speech and movement quite restored, would come after her.

So she stayed in the pantry, the cloth close to her face and rumped up in her hands.

The shelves were stacked with jam-pots, pudding basins, bottles, some full of sauce and home-made cordials, some empty. In the safe was just the bread-crock, a bit of butter, a bit of cheese and a bone of mutton.

More than once she opened the safe, looked in vacantly, then buttoned the wire door again. She, somehow, could not keep away from that safe, and the next time she opened it, she put her hand to the top and blindly groped. The shelf was neatly spread with laundry paper, blue and thin. Right in the corner was a tiny bottle. It was empty. She smelt first and then tasted the cork.

The bottle had held glycerine. And what help was that?

A funny thing to keep in a pantry—and that was all you could say!

She put the bottle back and then, under the laundry paper in the corner, felt a ridge. It was a piece of stiff paper, folded small, and black in the folds. She spread this out on the pantry shelf; the cold north light



"'You'll marry me now, won't you, Patience?' She looked at him in her slow, reflective way, and he rather wondered at the glow upon her face. He was stupefied, perhaps a bit shocked. Patience had lost her aunt and yet she seemed happy."

through the barred window fell upon it. Written faintly, yet very carefully, in ink that had gone brown, she read the words:

Twenty drops to thirty drops. Ten pips. Soak, dabble and fold. Leave alone.

Patience stared at the writing. It must be her grandmother's. Old writing—and older stain! She looked at the paper, she looked at the cloth; and she felt cold as a stone, here, in the dull pantry, which was sunk down three steps from the kitchen.

And, as she stood there, a voice came to her again, thick and anxious:

"Don't you cut down the Cockle Pippin, or you'll live to be sorry."

Twenty drops—glycerine. Thirty drops

—water. Ten pips—of the Cockle Pippin. Was that it?

She stood there trying to puzzle it out, and it seemed to her that her grandmother stood on one side, Aunt Ann on the other. They smiled at her and poked their eager old faces forward and gently jogged her elbows.

She went at last to the laundry, where they had always kept a bottle of glycerine, so that they might rub some over their hands and bare arms before they went out of the steaming laundry into the cold wind. She carried this bottle into the pantry, for there seemed to be religion and some kind of spell to this place. And the job, if she could do it, must be done here, as the dead



“‘Can’t say that I will,’ she returned, smiling at him, in a gentle, friendly way—not seeming to take much notice of him. For she did not think she wanted him. The human heart is empty ground and she had planted hers, as thick as it would hold, with apple-trees!’”

women had done it—and with nobody looking through the crack this time!

She went off to the attic, where apples were stored. Patience always rigorously said her prayers night and morning, but now, as she climbed that ladder-like stair leading to the attic, she said a funny prayer, without any words. It left her exhausted. She

prayed that she might find some Cockle Pippins. For she thought, “Suppose there’s no Cockles left. Or suppose they’ve rotted.”

It was late in the year for keeping apples, and she knew that they had very few left of any sort. In the attic, she walked along by the sweet hay where apples, green or rosy, stood in broken rows.

Some were as big as a countryman's fist ; some were little and puckered, as Aunt Ann's face had been.

She found five of the Pippins, and one was rotten. She carried them in her apron to the pantry, and she solemnly locked that door. Still praying and in a wordless way which made her chest feel tight, she pared and cored the apples, measured the water and glycerine, put the pips to soak.

Then she went out, with the key of the pantry in her pocket, and walked about the orchard talking to the trees, and saying most things to the Cockle Pippin. Once, her fat face clouded, as she whispered to it :

"If the stain don't come out, I'll have you cut down before I go."

And, once more, the fierce new Patience Tuppen who kept popping up frightened her to death. If you were alone too much, you found that you were living with a strange person.

When she thought the pips were soaked enough, and that was last thing at night, she poured the stuff over the stain, dabbed at it vigorously, folded it up tight and locked it in the pantry.

She could not possibly undress and go calmly to bed. She made a little fire in the sitting-room and sat there stiffly looking at the best furniture and feeling awed, as she always did in this room, which was never used except at solemn times. But was not this the most solemn night that Tuppens had known for eighty years ?

It meant keeping your home or losing it—this night ! A night that was very still and black and warm. She listened to the gentle, the almost invisible country sounds—of creaking bough, of stirring birds or the nervous scamper of small, hunted animals. At last she fell asleep with her head on her big chest, and her reddish hair loosened.

She awoke, startled, to brilliant sun and the bright singing of birds. Very stiff and vague, wondering for a moment where she was, she arose and stretched her arms until they nearly touched the low rafter.

And she knew that she'd got to go into the pantry, and she was frightened to go. For if that stain was still there, then the new fierce Patience Tuppen would get the

upper hand—and she did not know what dreadful thing might happen : to her own life, or to this place.

The key was in her pocket. She opened the door and, fearfully, as you'd walk towards a sleeping dog, known to be savage, she went to the shelf and unfolded the cloth.

Unfolded it, shook it out, held it to the steady cold light that came, unvarying always, through this north window.

And the stain was gone. She saw nothing but the pathetic yellow of old linen—no wicked mark—that might be wine, or might be blood !

Trembling, she heated water. Then, doing it all in the pantry, with the door locked, she washed that cloth and, in the end, delicately laundered it. She lingered over the work, for never had there been such high, hushed joy in any job that she had done.

It was packed up and she took it to the post, registering it, very early in the morning. And she had remembered to enclose a letter, saying, a bit stiffly, that she would stay on. For that was the way to treat these high-handed people—stiffly. Aunt Ann had said so.

The woods, as she went home, were tenderly green, with a patch of twiggy darkness here and there, which was leafless ash-tree.

On the edge of the wood she met Jim Buckman going to work. And he said to her, with simple coaxing :

"You'll marry me now, won't you, Patience ?"

She looked at him in her slow, reflective way, and he rather wondered at the glow upon her face. He was stupefied, perhaps a bit shocked. Patience had lost her aunt and yet she seemed happy.

"Can't say that I will," she returned, smiling at him, in a gentle, friendly way—not seeming to take much notice of him.

For she did not think she wanted him. The human heart is empty ground and she had planted hers, as thick as it would hold, with apple-trees !

Jim laughed, and he said before he went off whistling into the wood :

"I'll talk to you in cider-making time ; for you're soft-hearted then."



THE COMPANION

◉ By RICHMAL CROMPTON ◉

◉ ILLUSTRATED BY E. WELCH RIDOUT ◉

MISS FLEWETT was Miss Blenkinson's companion. She had been Miss Blenkinson's companion for twenty years. She had gone to Miss Blenkinson comparatively young and comparatively uncrushed at the age of thirty, and she was still with her, old and more than comparatively crushed at fifty. People who liked Miss Blenkinson (and there were a few of them) called her "an aristocrat of the old school." People who disliked Miss Blenkinson (and there were many of them) called her a "disagreeable old cat." Miss Flewett, who had learnt discretion as well as a few other things in those twenty years, didn't call her anything at all even to herself.

Miss Blenkinson was large and majestic and dignified. She permitted no familiarities from anyone, even from her Pekingese (who was as stout and majestic and self-important as his mistress and never attempted any). Miss Blenkinson possessed that type of features which is often referred to as "patrician," that is to say, her nose and the corners of her mouth turned down almost at right angles to the rest of her face, she had baggy but keen eyes, and a manner of extreme hauteur even when she was only saying "Sweet!" to her canary. She had a petrifying habit (at least Miss Flewett found it petrifying) of raising her eyebrows as though surprised when she spoke to you. Her smile was like something tortured and no one had ever heard her laugh. Miss Flewett was half the size of her patroness. She had the stoop of the habitually meek: she had not been born meek, but meekness had been thrust upon her by Miss Blenkinson. There was a scared look about her that also had been thrust upon her by Miss Blenkinson. When first Miss Flewett had entered Miss Blenkinson's service she had had a fixed determination to make herself indispensable to her employer. She had determined to be "guide, philosopher and friend." She had determined to enter the inner portals of Miss Blenkinson's heart. She had determined to understand Miss

Blenkinson as no one else had ever understood her and to be the support of her declining years. The first sight of Miss Blenkinson had given her a shock. The first day with Miss Blenkinson had been a series of shocks. When nightfall came Miss Flewett was tired and scared and a little bewildered. But she was still optimistic. She said to herself, "She's rather hard on the surface—but I shall soon get to know her better." So optimistic was she that it was literally years before she accepted the fact that she never would get to know her better. Nobody ever got to know Miss Blenkinson better. Miss Blenkinson did not want people to get to know her better. She did not allow people to get to know her better. She would have considered it presumption on anyone's part even to attempt to get to know her better. Nor did she want any other support for her declining years than herself. She was quite capable of supporting her declining years unaided.

Gradually Miss Flewett grew accustomed to being snubbed. Snubs were her daily bread. She breathed in snubs with the very air. For twenty years she existed as a meek and deferential and ever-present butt for the snubs of Miss Blenkinson, who, through long practice, had brought snubbing to a fine and delicate art. Had Miss Blenkinson ever drawn up a list of her companion's duties as they existed in her mind, the first and most vital one would have been "to be snubbed." You'd have thought, of course, that twenty years of snubbing would have hardened Miss Flewett, but it hadn't. Something in her still winced whenever it happened. Hidden deep down beneath her meek exterior there was a boiling, seething sense of grievance, but it was hidden so deep down that she herself was unaware of its existence. Sometimes, she knew, she lay in bed and hated Miss Blenkinson's hair or eyelids or wrinkles with a curiously passionate intensity of hatred, but she did not consider that Miss Blenkinson was in any way to blame for that. She looked upon

it merely as a failure on her part to do her duty to her employer. She had a high ideal of the duties of a companion, and to hate her employer's hair or eyelids or wrinkles was not one of them.

At first she had tried hard to avoid exposing herself to snubs, but she had learnt that it was impossible to avoid them, and now,

the flowers. Only a few of Miss Blenkinson's tactics still had power to upset her—chiefly that of looking at her with eyebrows raised as high as they would go and the corners of her mouth turned as



"Nor did she want any other support for her declining years than herself. She was quite capable of supporting her declining years unaided."

despite the hidden resentment and bitterness, she accepted them philosophically enough. They were part of the day's work, like grooming the Pekingese and arranging

low as they would go, and saying in a slow drawl expressive of immeasurable exasperation and patience, "*Really*, Miss Flewett. Sometimes it seems almost im-

possible to make you understand anything at all."

That could still make her go hot and cold all over.

* * * * *

They had just had afternoon tea. Colonel and Mrs. Rothwell were



"Gradually Miss Flewett grew accustomed to being snubbed. Snubs were her daily bread. She breathed in snubs with the very air."

there. Miss Blenkinson, large and majestic and self-important, sat in state in the big arm-chair by the fire, embroidering a piece of tapestry. Miss Flewett, meek and twittering and nervous, sat on the other side of the hearth knitting scarves for Miss Blenkinson's pet charity. Miss Blenkinson's rule was that when fewer than four guests were present, needlework was permissible, which in Miss Flewett's case meant compulsory.

Colonel Rothwell had been comparing the public school of his day with the school which his sons now attended.

"Bullying," he said, "has to all intents and purposes stopped. I don't know what or who's stopped it, but I know that when I first went to school the small boys were literally half killed by the big ones."

Miss Flewett looked up from her scarf and spoke impulsively. "I expect it was they who stopped it when they became big boys. They'd remember what they suffered and it

would make them see to it that no one else suffered that way."

"Curiously enough, that wasn't so," said the Colonel thoughtfully. "You'd have expected it to work out that way, but it didn't. The boys who'd been bullied the worst as kids always turned out the biggest bullies later on."

Miss Flewett was aware that Miss Blenkinson was staring at her in the way that always petrified her so—a stare of haughty amazement, eyebrows up, mouth down. When Miss Blenkinson had completely demoralised her companion by this stare (one of her favourite disciplinary measures), she turned to Colonel Rothwell and said suavely:

"Miss Flewett, of course, knows nothing about public schools."

Then, turning her back upon her companion, she began to discuss the school to which her father and the Colonel had been.

Miss Flewett sat trembling. It always upset her. Somehow, even after all these twenty years, she couldn't get used to it. For comfort she took refuge in her day-dream. The day-dream had first come to her about ten years ago when she had finally

given up all hope of entering the inner portals of Miss Blenkinson's heart or even getting to know her better. It was a comforting day-dream though a little vague. Even when Miss Blenkinson was talking to her and she had to keep all her wits about her and couldn't afford to be day-dreaming, it was a comfort just to know that it was there. And now when Miss Blenkinson was talking about Harrow with the Rothwells and had as good as told her to keep her mouth shut, she could abandon herself to it entirely. It was, as I have said, a very vague day-dream, and in it Miss Flewett had a double personality. There were only two characters in it, and Miss Flewett played them both. One was a patroness as rich and influential and important as Miss Blenkinson, but with a kindly, humble, sympathetic nature. She had a companion whom she treated as a daughter. She deferred to her, she consulted her at every turn, she confided in her, she even admired her. She told her frequently that she didn't

know what she'd do without her. She was always preparing little surprises for her. She remembered her birthday. She never, never snubbed her. She never said to her, "*Really . . .* sometimes it seems impossible

log on. That too was one of the things she'd never been quite able to get used to —being ordered about like that, sharply and curtly, without being looked at. She returned to her seat and to her day-dreams, and soon after-



to make you understand anything at all." Miss Flewett took the part of this employer in her day-dream, but she also took the part of the companion. It was so delicious to be petted and consulted and made much of that she couldn't bear to forgo it even though she was really the other character, and anyway it was all a dream.

"Put another log on, please, Miss Flewett." Her employer spoke curtly without looking at her. Miss Flewett got up from her chair and very meekly put another

"Miss Flewett looked at her for a minute in silence, a strange panic swept over her. . . . It was coming. . . . she knew it was coming. She struggled helplessly against it, but she knew it had to come."

wards the Colonel and Mrs. Rothwell took their leave.

"Miss Flewett," said Miss Blenkinson, imperiously distant as ever, "will you please fetch me my smelling-salts? I feel the room a little close."

Miss Flewett knelt down at the hearth and began to take off the log she had just put on.

"I asked you to fetch my smelling-salts, Miss Flewett," said Miss Blenkinson's icy voice behind her.

"I thought I'd put too big a log on—

as you felt the room close," faltered Miss Flewett. There was a silence. Slowly and reluctantly she turned to meet Miss Blenkinson's gaze. Miss Blenkinson was staring at her, as if in amazement, eyebrows raised and mouth drawn down. Miss Flewett's heart began to beat unevenly. It was coming. She knew it was coming. It came.

"Really, Miss Flewett. Sometimes it seems impossible to make you understand anything at all."

Miss Flewett ran upstairs, trembling, to fetch the smelling-salts.

Miss Flewett had come to her London flat. She had changed so completely in the past year that you would hardly have recognised her. You would have thought her in the old days crushed beyond all hope of recovery, but she had not been. There were undreamed-of powers of resilience in her, as indeed there are in all of us. She stooped no longer. She had lost her air of meekness. She seemed actually to have expanded in all directions. She had acquired incredibly an air of magnificence. She did her hair as Miss Blenkinson had done hers.



"'Really, Miss Blackstone,' she said, 'sometimes it seems impossible to make you understand anything at all.'"

It was a shock when she returned to find her employer dead in her chair.

It was still more of a shock to discover some days later that she had left the whole of her fortune to her companion.

* * * * *

She dressed in the style in which Miss Blenkinson had dressed. She had adopted many of Miss Blenkinson's mannerisms. This imitation of her dead employer was entirely unconscious. Miss Flewett now held the position which Miss Blenkinson had held,

knew that sense of power which Miss Blenkinson had known, moved in the circles in which Miss Blenkinson had moved, and she reacted to the atmosphere automatically. She had spent the greater part of her life warily watching the moods and habits and bearing of Miss Blenkinson, and now that she held Miss Blenkinson's place the moods, habits and bearing of Miss Blenkinson seemed to come to her of their own accord. Miss Flewett would have been surprised had anyone told her how much she was growing to resemble her dead patroness.

She had spent the last year moving from expensive hotel to expensive hotel along the South Coast. It was obvious everywhere that she was wealthy, and so wherever she went she met with deference. Very, very gradually—minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, week by week—she had unconsciously shed the mannerisms of Miss Flewett and adopted the mannerisms of Miss Blenkinson. She had told no one of her former occupation. She had, as a matter of fact, almost forgotten it herself. Her present was so spacious that it seemed inconceivable that her past could have been a crushed and thwarted one. Fortunately Miss Blenkinson had never travelled or stayed at hotels and her circle had been as small and select as the country town in which she had lived, so it was highly unlikely that Miss Flewett should meet anyone who had known her in the old days.

It seemed, of course, rather daring and enterprising to settle in London, but Miss Flewett was developing powers of daring and enterprise with which no one who had known her as Miss Blenkinson's companion would have credited her.

Just at first she was perfectly happy in the flat in London. An expensively faultless furniture-shop had provided her with expensively faultless furniture, and an expensively faultless registry office had provided her with expensively faultless maids. She had bought a Pekingese. But gradually she became conscious that there was a lack in her life. She was aware of the lack for some time before she realised what it was, but as soon as she realised it, she advertised for a companion.

* * * * *

Miss Blackstone, Miss Flewett's companion, sat on one side of the hearth knitting a scarf for Miss Flewett's pet charity. Miss Flewett herself sat on the other side of the hearth working at a piece of tapestry.

Miss Flewett, though she did not know it,

had chosen Miss Blackstone chiefly on account of a slight likeness to herself as she had been in the old days. Miss Blackstone was thin and nervous, with an habitual air of meekness, which was the natural result of ten years' companionship of elderly and autocratic ladies. She was the companion whom Miss Flewett as an employer had petted and consulted and made much of in her day-dream. She had been with Miss Flewett a month now, and Miss Flewett enjoyed having her more than she would have admitted to anyone, more, in fact, than she admitted to herself. She did not consult or confide in her, however. She'd never consulted or confided in anyone in her life, and wasn't likely to start now. She considered that she was very kind to her. As kind as one ought to be, that is, to a person in that position. It is not kindness to spoil people and unfit them for the state of life to which it has pleased God to call them. A companion must, of course, be kept in her place, because, look at it how you would, she was a paid servant and must not be allowed to look upon herself as an unpaid friend. The whole social fabric rested on such fine distinctions, and they must be upheld. Miss Flewett felt very strongly about the social fabric and fine distinctions being upheld.

"Please put another log on the fire, Miss Blackstone," she said without looking up from her work.

Somehow—she didn't know why—her thoughts went back to that last tea-party of Miss Blenkinson's—the one at which Colonel and Mrs. Rothwell had been present, the one just before Miss Blenkinson's death. She didn't know why it all came back so vividly. Of course, her drawing-room was arranged in exactly the same manner as Miss Blenkinson's had been—the china cabinet there—the sofa there—the occasional tables there and there and there—the chairs there. At the time when Miss Flewett had arranged her drawing-room it had never occurred to her that she was arranging it just as Miss Blenkinson's had been arranged. She had done it quite unconsciously, and it came to her now with something of a shock how very like Miss Blenkinson's drawing-room it was. Perhaps it was that which made her mind go back to that fateful afternoon. The Colonel had sat just there . . . and Mrs. Rothwell just there . . . and Miss Blenkinson there where she now sat . . . and she herself there where Miss Blackstone now sat. Miss Blackstone had put the log on the fire

and was bending her meek head over her knitting. Miss Flewett knew that she was nervously anxious to talk to her employer, which was one of her duties, but dared not begin a conversation for fear of being snubbed. Miss Flewett savoured this delicious knowledge for a few minutes in silence, then she said very kindly :

"Have you had good news of your sister, Miss Blackstone?"

Miss Blackstone began to talk eagerly, volubly, gratefully, about her sister, pouring out the latest details of her obscure disease (most of Miss Blackstone's relatives seemed to suffer from obscure diseases), and going on from that to her brother-in-law's progress in his business and their children's progress at school. Miss Flewett was bored. She was not in the least interested in Miss Blackstone's sister's family. But there was a quivering note of deference in Miss Blackstone's voice that vaguely soothed and comforted Miss Flewett. It seems absurd to think that Miss Flewett required soothing and comforting, and the need was quite unconscious. It was as if there were in her soul an old and ever-nagging wound that required perpetual balm. But she wasn't interested in Miss Blackstone's family. Funny how she kept thinking of that last tea-party of Miss Blenkinson's, the one at which Colonel and Mrs. Rothwell had been guests. What had they been talking about? Suddenly she remembered—bullying in schools. What a strange thing for them to talk about! Colonel Rothwell had begun it. He had said that the boys who had been bullied most when small became the worst bullies afterwards. Miss Flewett had thought that that was impossible, and she thought so still. Naturally the boys who'd suffered would be the last to inflict suffering on others. It stood to reason.

"... he's only five and he can read quite well. That's good, isn't it?" Miss Blackstone was saying tremulously. Her voice, flutteringly nervous and deprecating, pleased Miss Flewett.

"Quite good," said Miss Flewett, distantly gracious.

Then Miss Blenkinson and Colonel Rothwell had talked about Harrow and she'd stopped listening and begun to dream. She

even remembered what she had dreamed about. She'd imagined that she was rich and powerful and had a companion to whom she was very kind. Well, it had all come true. She was rich and powerful and she had a companion to whom she was very kind. She was very kind indeed to Miss Blackstone—very kind—no one could deny it. Why, she'd given her a most beautiful workbox at Christmas. She was *most* kind—considering, of course, their respective positions. . . . She remembered that she'd determined never to say, "*Really* . . . sometimes it seems impossible to make you understand anything." . . . Well, she never had said it.

Miss Blackstone had stopped talking about her sister and had relapsed into silence and her scarf again. Miss Flewett felt cold—a chill seemed to have crept into the room in spite of the log which Miss Blackstone had just put on to the fire.

"I feel the room rather chilly, Miss Blackstone," she said. "Will you be so good as to fetch me my shawl?"

Miss Blackstone rose with nervous haste.

"My woollen shawl," added Miss Flewett as her companion reached the door.

While she was away Miss Flewett returned to her thoughts—why, once, she'd given Miss Blackstone a jar of calf's-foot jelly to take to her invalid sister. Miss Blackstone ought to be grateful. A nice, soft, easy life, waited on hand and foot, living in luxury and paid for it—that was what it came to. Miss Blackstone entered and arranged a shawl respectfully over her employer's shoulders. It was a silk shawl. Miss Flewett felt a quite disproportionate annoyance.

"I said my woollen shawl, Miss Blackstone," she said.

"I'm sorry. I thought you meant the silk one," faltered Miss Blackstone tremulously.

Miss Flewett looked at her for a minute in silence, a strange panic swept over her. . . . It was coming . . . she knew it was coming. She struggled helplessly against it, but she knew it had to come. She couldn't stop it. It was something quite beyond her control. She stared at Miss Blackstone—eyebrows raised, mouth drawn down.

"*Really*, Miss Blackstone," she said, "sometimes it seems impossible to make you understand anything at all."



SOMETIMES WE : WONDER :

By ETHEL M. RADBOURNE

• • ILLUSTRATED BY TOM PEDDIE • •

THE man in the chair opposite Chelson had slipped into a queer attitude. He sprawled in the grotesque ways of sleep, his legs stretched, toes uptilted; his arms and shoulders huddled into the padded corners of the chair. His head fallen back, showed the mouth agape and sagging. There was no colour in the face; Rashleigh had always shown a sallow complexion to the world. While he was asleep, his good humour, the sheer friendliness of him, seemed blotted out. He was simply body, utterly wearied.

"Queer that he should have looked to me for aid," Chelson was musing. "And to-day! He has chosen the time when I'm completely out of luck. Rashleigh has an idea I'm a success. Success?"

Chelson shrugged and let his thoughts sag in unison with his companion's sleeping body. Evening was advancing like a third presence into the room. It was intensely cold. Glancing at the window Chelson saw snow falling; the flakes gyrated absurdly to the wind's suggestion. The air was presently thick with these white dancers. Some of them pressed against the window-pane; there was even now and then a hint of sound, as if they were alive and sentient, whispering to Chelson. The wind, rising, drove the snowflakes to still faster evolutions. They seemed now to build a fantastic wall that altered shape and fashion with every moment. A face, peering suddenly through the wall, appeared to push its way through from some outlandish realm beyond. Chelson watched this face for a moment that mimicked a long cycle of Time. His thoughts were busy, docketing, clearing and arranging pigeon-holes of plans. That pregnant moment over, Chelson rose from his chair and tiptoed towards his sleeping friend. Sleep was having its way with Rashleigh; he was captive, bound and

gagged. Chelson, assured, took a wad of paper from his pocket and pushed it into one of Rashleigh's. The man never moved. Not so much as the flicker of an eyelash jarred Chelson's nerves. Rashleigh sprawled still, legs stretched, toes foolishly uptilted. Not a glimmer of awakening, either, when Chelson moved with studied care across the floor.

Chelson came into the passage-way with a sense of uplifting. So far, good. He felt master of himself. Fear was not yapping at his heels. He waited with assurance for the sound of the bell. When it came he moved to the front door and opened it to the fury of the storm. Snow beat about his head and shoulders; in a moment he was almost as thickly powdered as the man whose face he had seen just now pushing through the veil of snow.

"What a night!" The new-comer stamped his feet and shook snow from his shoulders. "My word, Chelson, what a night! But I had to see you. There's money missing from my desk. You were there this afternoon and can remember all the various comings and goings."

"Money?"

"Notes. A good wad of them."

Chelson and his employer stood together in the hall-way. Chelson, after a moment's hesitation, jerked a hand towards the closed door of his sitting-room. "We shouldn't be alone. I've a friend asleep in there. Best talk here if you don't mind."

Chelson felt still absolute master of himself. His thoughts worked methodically. There was no panic—not even as he stood and watched Linworth, his employer, as he went over the afternoon's movements. He, Linworth, had been in his office from two till four; Chelson had been there from two till five. At five Linworth had returned and Chelson had come away. There had

been no moment throughout the afternoon when either Linworth or Chelson had not been in the room. Linworth had—carelessly, he admitted—pushed a loose wad of notes into a pigeon-hole of his desk. They would be visible to anyone who happened to glance that way. Four people had been in the office whilst Linworth was there; all of them known and trusted by Linworth,

leigh's his name—came to see me. Whilst he was there I was called to the telephone for a minute. I had my back to your desk."

In an instant's pause Linworth had visualised this man. Rashleigh's hands, deft and capable, moving with celerity and despatch. There would be time and opportunity. Probably when Chelson turned



"Chelson, assured, took a wad of paper from his pocket and pushed it into one of Rashleigh's. The man never moved."

men he had done business with for years. Chelson the same. He, Linworth, would no more doubt Chelson's loyalty than he would doubt his own. There remained the hour when Linworth had been away. Who had come in and out during that period?

Chelson said instantly:

"One person only—the man asleep in there." He jerked a hand towards the sitting-room door. "That man — Rash-

leigh from the telephone he would see the man placid, unmoved.

"Rashleigh. I don't know him," Linworth said.

"You wouldn't. He's an old friend of mine. Came to tell me he was in a tight corner and asked help."

"Certainly, if he was the man, Time and Opportunity went hand in glove for a moment," Linworth said.

Chelson nodded. With deft mental evolutions he made plans. His original ones would have to go by the board since Linworth had returned to the office. Odd that he should have done so to-day! Custom would have fitted and made credible Chelson's schemes. But since Linworth had for once flouted his usual habit by returning at five—well, there remained Rashleigh asleep, an invaluable vehicle for Chelson.

"Come in here," Chelson whispered. He opened the door wide for Linworth's entrance. "Rashleigh was asleep just now."

He was still—but for a moment only. The sound of Linworth and Chelson's entry roused him. He yawned, stretched, then sat erect with a laugh.

"I'm sorry, Chelson. I was dead beat." He realised the presence of a stranger and got to his feet. "Dead beat—and went off before I knew it."

Linworth's eyes were hard and vigilant. His voice came in a few sharp volleys of sentences.

"You were in my office this afternoon? You came to see Chelson, he tells me. Did you happen to see a wad of notes lying on my desk? Left-hand pigeon-hole."

"No," Rashleigh said. "I never looked. I had eyes only for Chelson. I'm hard pressed, and I knew he'd help if he could. We're friends. Kids together and all that. Share the last crust." He laughed a little at sentimentality. "True, though," he added. "He *would*."

Linworth said abruptly, "Sorry to ask it. But if you'd let us see the contents of your pockets——"

"Gladly," Rashleigh laughed. "As empty as a shelled pea-pod." He showed one—then another. His mouth fell open. He stared like a man in a trance. "Why . . . why . . . it's not possible. I'm delirious . . . fever-ridden." His glance lifted suddenly to Linworth's face and Chelson's. "It's not true," he stammered. "It's a hoax."

Linworth was holding the wad of notes in his hand and counting. "That's right. All here. It's a clean sweep."

"I tell you it's a dream," Rashleigh said. "I've been asleep. I—I'm not awake. It's a nightmare. Chelson——" He put a hand on Chelson's arm and pressed hard. "Flesh and blood—no dream that. Chelson, old man, how can you explain it?"

Chelson shrugged. "Easy. I'd my back turned for a few minutes at the telephone.

The notes were there, near you. You were down and out—you'd told me so."

"Down and out"—Rashleigh's voice hesitated on the words. He seemed to beat them out on some anvil of consideration. Realisation made his voice come shrilly. "My God! You don't believe I'd *steal*? Chelson's my friend. He'll tell you I'm a decent sort. Clean—not a *hound*."

Linworth had slipped the notes into an inner pocket. Now for a moment he stood watching Rashleigh. Consideration—decision—the second followed quick on the heels of the first.

"Since I've the notes back I'll leave you to Chelson. He'll deal with you. I wash my hands of the matter. You've had a lucky escape. You owe it to Chelson that you're getting off easily. His friend——" Linworth glanced from one to the other. . . . "Well, I fancy *that's* over. Anyhow, I leave Chelson to do as he thinks well."

Chelson went to the door with his employer. "That's downright good of you," he whispered. "Most considerate way of ending the thing. I'll see what I can do to get him on his legs again. Down and out—driven. He usen't to be a bad sort. Hard pressed—or he'd not have done it. It's good of you to let the thing drop quietly."

The storm was still in full fury. It received Linworth into itself and hid him behind a wall of moving flakes. They eddied and swirled about Chelson, pelting him with white. Catching sight of himself in the hall glass as he stepped back, he had an impression of something ghost-like and half shrouded.

Rashleigh was still trying to fight the evidence of his eyes. He must be asleep still, he said. He needed some shock to awaken him. The incredible had happened; awake, he could laugh at it.

Chelson watched him. A queer man, Rashleigh; good-humoured and trustful to a degree.

"Chelson, how do you explain it?" Then abruptly and with a change in the timbre of his voice, "Chelson—you don't think I'd *steal*?"

Chelson shrugged. For the moment he was a consummate actor. His gesture showed him in the grip of realisation. It set Rashleigh at some incredible distance, outside the pale of friendship.

"You believe I'm a thief?" Rashleigh's bewilderment was like a weight on his lips.

He half stammered. "You . . . Chelson, it's unbelievable . . . you . . . you can't think it . . . you . . . you can't . . ."

Chelson stifled a breath of relief. The man was a fool. It never entered his head to doubt Chelson. He would as soon doubt the immutability of sun and stars. Chelson was safe. He was secure behind the impregnable wall of Rashleigh's trust.

"Best get off quietly now," Chelson said. "I'll do what I can for you. But, first, you'd best get quietly home. I'll not see you want if I can help it."

Rashleigh's hand came down on Chelson's shoulder. "I knew you'd help if you could. As for this other matter—" He drew away suddenly, staring at Chelson. His expression altered. "But you *believed*. You thought me hound enough to steal, behind your back." He moved farther away from Chelson's side. "Thanks, Chelson, but until you cease to think that of me I can't accept your help. I'd starve rather."

Chelson's silence was like a wall, built rapidly but strongly. Behind it Rashleigh's movements seemed immaterial. He had gone almost before Chelson had realised the end of the interview. The storm had swallowed him, hidden him.

Well—it was a pity, of course. Poor Rashleigh! A puppet, sacrificed to Chelson's need. Chelson rapidly reviewed his own case. He had staked his savings on horse-flesh, and lost amazingly. His dilemma still pressed and clamoured. He had tricked and manoeuvred—but he was still sure of his post with Linworth. His theft was neatly packed on to Rashleigh's shoulders—Rashleigh's, the broad-backed, the incredibly trustful. It had never occurred to him that Chelson had slipped the notes into his pocket. Sun, stars, friendship—three things of immutability.

Chelson, sitting near the empty fire-grate, faced the chair that had recently held Rashleigh. The bulk of him seemed still there, seemed to sag and crumple in postures of sleep. His friend—for how many years? Thirty at least. Chelson remembered being taken as a fatherless boy into the home of Rashleigh's parents. They were simple folk—but kindly. Chelson felt the memory of their kindness like a menacing barrier about him. He was hemmed in with trifling recollections. . . . The way old Mrs. Rashleigh would mend his clothes, and put arnica on his wounds after a football scrimmage. . . . Or the comfortable feel

of her hand if he fell sick. . . . Young Rashleigh had received Chelson as if orphanhood were a royal ticket of admission. He was faithful and persistent courier to Chelson's needs. . . . A simple home, but of an amazing friendliness. Details became flails. They were swords, sharp-pointed. They came in volleying crowds about him; the dancing snowflakes outside were not more multitudinous than his memories of the Rashleighs' kindness to him. Young Rashleigh . . . his pal . . . fat, good-humoured . . . always a heavy sleeper, sprawling in good-natured bulk across the bed they shared as lads. . . . He had not changed. To-day, asleep in that chair opposite, he was the same Rashleigh, grown heavier.

Chelson shifted his chair so that he need not face the window and the storm. To-night the elements seemed to be in league against him. They made an island of the house, leaving it storm-girt and alone. The Rashleighs—queer how to-night those old days materialised, crammed with detail. . . . Mother Rashleigh's hair thinning on the temples . . . young Rashleigh and his odd impulsive gestures. . . . And his voice, "Pals, eh, Chelson? Share the last crust." Sentimental phrase—but Rashleigh rang true. He *meant* it. Well, it had worked nicely for Chelson's schemes to-night. Not for a moment had Rashleigh doubted Chelson's honour. He had simply blundered out into the storm aghast because Chelson doubted *him*. "I'm not a hound," Rashleigh had said. "Chelson will tell you I'm a decent sort."

Suddenly Chelson knew fear. He felt afraid of something that stirred within himself. Remorse—he had often scoffed at the word, but it had him in a grip that threatened to strangle. It was a skilled wrestler trying to throw him—succeeding too. Chelson grovelled in the dust of realisation. Rashleigh . . . his old mother . . . their amazing kindness when he was a lad . . . details . . . flails and thongs of memory. . . .

But whichever way his thoughts moved he came upon blankness. If he made a clean breast of it to Linworth he would lose his post. If to Rashleigh, he would lose his friendship. Picture Rashleigh *knowing*! Shrinking from knowledge as he would from filth! Yet the thought of Rashleigh in ignorance was too sharp-pointed a weapon; it pricked and goaded Chelson till his hands moved for pen and paper.

DEAR RASHLEIGH,—

You're clean . . . honest. . . . You'd

Listen, Rashleigh. I'll make a clean breast of it. It was like this——"

The penned words sprawled across the paper like accusing faces. They leered up at him. The rustle of paper was a laugh of derision.

Once started he must complete the cycle of abasement. Linworth must be told that Rashleigh's hands were clean.

Penned words again—grotesque caricatures of sentences, incredibly true. . . . "I took those notes—and slipped them afterwards into

Rashleigh's pocket. I, Chelson——"

These must be posted—and at once. With the night he might turn craven, shirking the shame of confession.

He was glad of the storm. It received him



"You don't believe I'd steal? Chelson's my friend. He'll tell you I'm a decent sort. Clean—not a hound."

no more think of theft than a babe unborn. into itself; he was beaten and buffeted,

a mere toy for the wind's amusement. He felt now swept from old moorings and adrift. The letters posted—where should he go? Not home again; not to the room that

A motor-bus came to a standstill near the pavement on which Chelson stood. He boarded it, not caring in which direction it went. It would at any rate mean move-



"Linworth was holding the wad of notes in his hand and counting. 'That's right. All here. It's a clean sweep.'"

had so recently held Rashleigh, the trustful. ment and an interval in which to form plans.

Plans? They would be useless. He was a derelict; a betrayer of trust. Yet deep within him an idea began to stir, to take form. Meantime he was moving; to-night anything rather than stillness. He noticed that a certain brooding stillness was settling upon the night itself, fashioning it to a semblance of cold steel. The snowstorm had ceased; the wind now swept the sky clear of clouds for the moon to ride unchallenged. It was intensely cold; the semblance of steel in the atmosphere pierced one through.

The bus terminus reached—where next? Chelson learnt from the driver that by a change of three motor coaches he could reach the sea at Altoncliffe. He decided to travel seawards; and the plan that his thoughts bore as seed began to fructify and grow. He was simply derelict. Linworth, of course, could no longer trust him; he would lose his post. His savings had vanished into thin air. At his age, and with a stain on his name, another post would be as elusive as a shadow. And then abruptly Chelson realised that none of these things counted beside the fact that he had betrayed Rashleigh. Other things were embroidery, edges only to the stuff of his betrayal of friendship. Rashleigh—the thought of him was cinematograph-like. . . . Rashleigh the boy, adoring Chelson, fighting a bigger lad than himself who had dared to twit Chelson with his orphanhood. . . . Rashleigh, with bleeding lip and blackened eyes, defending Chelson—"He's my friend, I tell you." Sentimental chap, Rashleigh—but true as steel. True—Chelson heard Rashleigh's voice as he had heard it an hour or two ago. . . . "Chelson's my friend. He'll tell you I'm a decent sort. . . ." Rashleigh's old mother with coarse, toil-marked hands that were yet of an amazing gentleness. . . . Long fireside evenings of snug comradeship. . . . Rashleigh stunned and half dazed just now, staggering out into the storm. . . .

Arrived at his journey's end Chelson took a path that led away from habitation. Soon he was on a track that led directly seawards and towards a line of jagged cliffs. In the steel-light of the moon detail was amazing: grass blades; the bloom on the leaf of sea holly. Here, near the sea, the cold came like a knife-thrust. The whole surface of the sea when Chelson came to the cliff edge was glass-like; reflecting the moon's light and transmuting it to the facets of gigantic jewels. Of sound there was little. Even

the advance and retreat of the waves was muted, a faint sibilance of sound only at the cliff-foot.

Chelson stared downwards. It was a mighty drop. Sheer over the edge—a breathless moment perhaps of consciousness—and then utter forgetfulness of Rashleigh's face and its amazing trustfulness. Details would slip from him like a shed coat. It would be peace. And as long now as breath stayed in his body and his mind functioned he should loathe himself. Chelson peered over again, slid his feet to the edge, and dropped like a flung stone.

The intensity of light hurt him. Of course there had been a moon, and at full. Steel-like—he recalled his imagery. Then—the thought came like a blow—he was not dead. He had sight, thought, power. But he was incredibly tired. Even the shock of realisation passed in a sense of relaxation. He must lie still, scarcely breathing. Time to think presently; but just for a while, rest. He moved his head in an attempt to escape from the moon's glare. The light was wrapping him round like a sheath. He would have crawled from it but for the complete lassitude of his body. Shade—He found his lips shaping incomplete phrases. "Light . . . the glare of it . . . if I could crawl to shade. . . ."

He seemed to drop into depths of sleep, worn with the effort of word-shaping. Coming again to a sense of his surroundings, he was aware that someone had come near him. Chelson half turned his head and saw a man staring down at him.

"I've had a fall," Chelson managed utterance with difficulty. "Over the cliff-side. It's a wonder I'm not dead. . . . The glare of the moonlight . . . my eyes hurt."

"It's an intolerable light," the other nodded. "See——" He came and sat on the ground against Chelson so that the mass of his flung shadow shielded Chelson. "That better? I'll sit so for a little while."

"Kind of you," Chelson whispered.

"The glare hurts," the other whispered. "I understand how you hate it."

There was a faint trace of stiffness in the man's tongue. His words came slightly clipped and with deliberation. Chelson, glancing up from time to time, was struck with his face. Its expression arrested; something intense about his personality pierced through to Chelson's dulled consciousness. It was sheer friendliness to thrust his body between Chelson and the

light. Chelson's thoughts becoming clearer, he said aloud :

"It was a chance in a thousand I came down that cliff-side alive."

Something in the other's silence was encouragement. "Talk as much as you like," it seemed to say. "I know how that eases."

"How did you know?" Chelson asked. He caught himself up. "Stupid of me. I'm half stunned still. But your silence seemed understanding. After a minute's reflection Chelson added, "It's odd to find myself alive. It's a tragedy. I wanted death."

"Death?" The other glanced at Chelson, then away. "It's a word with false meaning in men's minds. As a matter of fact, there's no such thing. There's transition only."

"Transition—anything you like to call it." Chelson voiced impatience. "But I wanted to get away."

The man had shifted his position so that he could watch Chelson's face. His body still came like a shield between Chelson's eyes and the light.

"I wanted to forget."

"One does." The other nodded, reflectively. "But it's not possible."

Chelson, after a minute of consideration, decided that whoever this man was he could trust him. He was a safe depository. Words came now from Chelson's lips, torn from him by the stress of his circumstance.

"I'd played false. I'd gone under. I'd betrayed my best friend."

"Ah!" The man's face turned from Chelson for a moment. But not before Chelson had seen it distorted, twisted by some fierce gust of feeling.

"There was a man who trusted me," Chelson said. "He'd have stood my friend to the last breath in his body. He'd have shared his last meal. If possible he'd have stood between me and the worst strokes life could have dealt me. He was my friend, I tell you. And I betrayed him. I played him false." Chelson added, "For money. I sold friendship for a handful of bank-notes." Chelson moved his hand in quick imagery, as if with the right he grasped money, and with the left flung friendship to the four winds. He found himself watching the other, suddenly held by his gestures. The man was staring down at his own hands.

"I too," he said. "Yes—for money. For pieces of silver." His lips moved as if he counted coins. Almost Chelson's fancy could hear a dull metallic chink. "I too." Then abruptly he stooped to Chelson.

"That's why I'm with you now. I understand. Men like you are my mission. Men who have been betrayers. I was a betrayer."

Chelson was conscious of a sharp stirring of questioning. He was—where? Not at the cliff foot. His head raised, he saw no familiar contours. Rather he seemed girt about, hemmed in by Light, pure and simple. Details his eyes were not yet trained for. He felt like a child, groping in strange new immensities. His voice lifted suddenly, then fell to a whisper. "Where am I, then? Is this—"

"The place of light—and of complete understanding. That's why I am the chosen one to guard you for a while. I—who can understand."

"Then there's a chance—"

"Look at me," the other said.

Chelson looked. And it seemed to him that in this new atmosphere speech was a clumsy vehicle; as if, sensitised and more free from trammels, his thought travelled like light, unhampered. This one near him, shielding him partially from the light—who was he? Someone who had once sinned. Someone who had betrayed a trust. And because of that he understood. He was set apart. Say that he sat at the gate through which all betrayers entered. Then there was a chance . . . even. . . .

"If even I can expiate," the other said aloud, "I, the deepest dyed—"

Chelson had half risen. Movement seemed possible now. With the shifting of his position he moved from the other's sheltering shadow. He made no effort now to shield Chelson. And Chelson sensed suddenly that he would have to face the Light in its intensity. It was only for the first few minutes of realisation the other had sheltered. But he spoke once more to Chelson.

"Remember, even if the Light sears, it heals."

Chelson's thoughts were still earth-entangled. Threads of memory ran through the stuff of his thought. A poem he had read. . . . "The Hound of Heaven" . . . every soul persistently hunted. . . .

Chelson was aware now that there were others near him, and that the first figure was at a little distance, moving rapidly away.

"Who is that?" Chelson asked aloud.

A voice near answered, "He is the brother of those who despair."

Then, as if Chelson's senses were still earth-held and needing clearer definition, the voice added :

"He was once called Judas Iscariot."



THE ASPEN TREE.

BY WILFRID THORLEY.

HAVE you seen the Aspen tree
Shaking, shaking endlessly ?
Have you heard the song she sets
To her endless castanets ?
In the summer heat you can
See her frill and flounce and fan,
Hear her song, but still unseen
Hides the Aspen in the green.

Have you heard the Aspen tree
Chatter, chatter endlessly ?
Have you heard the laughing beat
Of her heart amid the heat ?
You may hear the wind that heaves
All the flounces of her sleeves,
Sets her hands a-clap and slips
Kisses from her finger-tips.

Have you heard the Aspen tree
Sighing, sighing endlessly ?
Have you heard her voice so thin
When the wheat is gathered in ?
Mirth has left her, and she lets
Fall her golden castanets,
Leaves her singing, summer gone
And herself a skeleton.

TRAINING A HUSBAND

By H. E. L. MELLERSH

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

ROSEMARY smiled across at her husband. She could just see his big brown face, set above his immense shoulders between a kind of vista of guests, and more than half shadowed from her by the line of lighted candles and the reflections of their flames down the length of her refectory board.

A gleam of white teeth answered her.

"Hello, Wasp, are you there? You're so little we can hardly see you this end!"

Everyone laughed. Rosemary pulled up one shoulder-strap of her dress, smoothed back her bright hair. She was glad, she told herself, that all were enjoying themselves; she was glad the dinner was becoming an informal, not to say hilarious, affair; she liked John being so popular. But still, she didn't quite like being laughed at like that; and she did wish—yes, she did wish!—he wouldn't call her by any of his silly, uncomplimentary nicknames in front of them all. . . . But Paul Wilber, the rising young dramatist and her particular guest for the evening, was saying something to her. . . .

Mr. Wilber had been delighting in the delicacy of Rosemary's complexion in the soft candle-light, in the curve of her slender neck. He received now the full fire from the battery of her very blue eyes.

"Why on earth," he said, "does your husband call you Wasp?"

"Because I'm so thin."

"Slim," amended Mr. Wilber.

"Thank you!" said Rosemary.

"He ought to be shot," said Mr. Wilber.

"What? Oh, he calls me worse things than that. 'Buns,' for instance—because I've never shingled my hair, you know. But that's really a mild one."

Paul Wilber took an olive gracefully between manicured finger and thumb.

"The man must be mad," he observed.

"I've already thanked the gods for those wonderful shining plaits of yours resting so near to your cheeks."

Rosemary almost blushed. . . . But her husband was talking away at the other end of the table again. He had a particularly admiring group round him: his lady-mother, his sister (like *Maud*, tall and stately) and two of his Rugger team. He seemed to be making a kind of mock speech. He was in his element—flashing his smile about. Rosemary caught little snatches: "Our first dinner party in our spacious flat. . . . Married just six months. . . . Jolly good wheeze, getting married—I had no idea! Catch 'em young, that's the way. . . . Old Wasp. . . . Absolutely eats out of my hand. . . ."

He raised his voice. "That's right, Buns, old thing, ain't it?"

Rosemary smiled, a little tremulously. She wondered how much she really objected to this way of his. It came to her as something of a revelation that although she had never once admitted it to herself before, she had in reality often registered a mental disapproval of his boisterous, light-hearted kind of admirably selfish treatment of her. But still, in front of all these people. . . . His sister was egging him on—of course! . . .

Rosemary looked at Mr. Wilber from under her lashes. He was dark like her husband, but dark very differently, in a sort of attenuated, smooth, glossy way. He must be about a quarter of John's bulk. He must have brains, though—only twenty-five and having a play produced in the West End! And he didn't seem to be "affected" either—except perhaps for his incipient side-whiskers. But he looked as if he were going to talk again. It was really rather fun having a dinner party!

"You know," said Wilber, stroking his beginning of whiskers gingerly, "I feel

tempted to tell you the theme of my play."

"Do!" said Rosemary.

"No! I mean, I wouldn't dream! But I think it would do your jolly old husband a bit of good—you might pass it on to him—what? You know, to say he doesn't appreciate his good fortune properly, is—is putting it mildly!"

"Have you ever kissed the Blarney Stone?" said Rosemary. "Well, what is your theme?"

And at that Mr. Wilber became elaborate and verbose. He took another olive. "Well," he said, and surveyed the bitten end of the olive sternly, "it's not easy. It's roughly—you see—that husbands treat their wives too cavalierly. Don't consider them enough—their fancies, and—er—desires, and idiosyncrasies. They just go ahead with their career, or their pastimes or what-not—and spare their wives a few minutes' thought now and then. Selfish, in fact. But, I say, you ought to come and see the play. I——"

"Tiny, what about adjourning?" came her husband's voice. He was already standing, without waiting for her answer.

"All right!" said Rosemary. . . .

With a few soft sighs of silk on silk, with somewhere the tinkle of a necklace, the ladies rose and preceded Rosemary out of the room.

In the hall John hurried out to her. "I say, do you know where that new box of cigarettes is?"

"In your dressing-room, I think."

"Are they? Oh, fetch 'em for me, there's a good kid!"

"All right!" said Rosemary. . . .

The dressing-room door at the end of the passage was ajar; and Rosemary pushed it open and switched on the light at the same time. Now, where *had* she seen those cigarettes? The door into their bedroom was very slightly open too, and there were some of her guests in there, come presumably to repair slight ravages upon their matt complexions.

"Yes, a sweet little thing!" said one. And Rosemary knew at once that they were talking of her—they always called her that!

"Sweet!" agreed the other. "Awfully pretty and nice! Just like a little Dresden shepherdess."

Rosemary looked at herself in John's glass. Corn-coloured hair, she saw; silly little pink-and-white face! Why did every one liken to a Dresden china shepherdess?

Anyway, though, she hadn't a little rosebud mouth—it was long—big! Thank Heavens for that!

But they were going on talking. She oughtn't to listen, of course! But she couldn't find the cigarettes. Mustn't move about, or she wouldn't hear what they said!

Burble, burble, burble! What was that? Ah, now she could hear again. "John's an awful dear. He's always been frightfully popular, you know. I mean, he can do anything!"

"Everybody seems to like him."

"He's one of those people who are selfish in a nice way—you know; you can't help almost admiring them for it."

"I know. And it's funny, but that sort always seems to marry the same sort of girl—the little clinging sort, that'll worship them and encourage them—be sort of always content to bask in their reflected glory."

("Oh!" said Rosemary to herself.)

"Only natural, my dear!" came the other voice. "Self-protective instinct—they'd get some nasty shocks otherwise. You see, she . . ."

But Rosemary waited for no more. Without the cigarettes, and silently, she crept down the stairs. . . .

When she entered her own drawing-room it looked to Rosemary somehow quite different. She had always thought before that it was a pretty room! . . . And then, all the women in it! She hated them! Presumably they all ruled their husbands beautifully, or meant to if they ever got them! *They* weren't Dresden china. Oh no; they weren't clay—they were made of sterner stuff! . . .

John's sister came over to her. "I say," she burst out, "have you heard what John said to that Poodles man at the last match? Oh, by the way, who's he playing to-morrow?"

Rosemary's lips formed something near to a pout. "I don't know!" she said.

"Rosemary!"

John's sister drifted away disapprovingly. . . .

Rosemary looked after her. Why didn't she dress more like her sister-in-law? Frilly, her own dress was; that was how she *would* dress—that just showed! John, of course, liked her in that dress. "Sweet little thing," they'd said. "Clinging!" . . .

With her hands folded in her lap, Rosemary sat and thought. Thought, while everybody seemed to be chattering and not taking any notice of her.

And then the men came back. "Buns, old thing," called John, "you never brought those cigarettes."

"No!"

John looked momentarily surprised.

But someone was saying: "Sing that thing you made up about Tubby, old man—do!"

They proceeded to form a group round John at the piano. Now that he had come back, Rosemary noticed, things were becoming ridiculously hilarious again. In a quiet corner a man was telling John's sister how priceless and how popular John had been in the trenches. . . .

Then Paul Wilber disentangled himself from a lady with a lot of necklaces and a wheedling voice, and came over to Rosemary. He began telling her more about his play. He *could* talk, this young man! Rosemary sat listening with one ear and watching her husband with both eyes. He was still singing at the piano, playing his own impromptu accompaniments. He was really rather priceless! Once, he turned round and grinned at her, quite unaware that he was in any way in disfavour. Rosemary didn't know whether she was mostly pleased or mostly annoyed at the grin—but decided that on the whole she was annoyed because she had smiled back!

But John had got back to his original "Now then, chorus altogether!" he yelled:

"Did you hear how Tubby got his Try?
Got his what? Got a Try! Oh, my eye!
Someone hit him in the—spine,
And he rolled across the line,
And that's how dear old Tubby got his TRY!"

A huge crescendo, John's stentorian voice topping the lot.

Rosemary stared at her husband's back. "John could do anything!" That was what those two in her bedroom had said. Yes; and she, Rosemary, was just "a nice little thing," toddling and trailing around after him, basking in his greatness, playing second fiddle—the sort of girl he would marry, for self-protection! Well . . . well, they would see!

Mr. Wilber was still talking. "Oh," said Rosemary, "hasn't your play started yet? I'm so sorry. I forgot."

Wilber looked a little crestfallen. "No; first night's to-morrow. 'S matter of fact it should have been to-night. We had the final dress rehearsal yesterday. But then the leading man had a fit—or something—I don't know! And so it was postponed.

Of course I'm really beholden to him because it enabled me to come here. And it's also given us a chance to touch up the principal scene. There's an extra rehearsal to-morrow morning."

"I've never been to a dress rehearsal."

"Come to this one, then! Do! I'd love you to. I'd like your opinion of it."

"Well, I don't know," said Rosemary, and looked again at her husband's slightly swaying back.

"Do! I'll meet you——"

"I'll tell you to-morrow morning," said Rosemary. "Ring me up, and I'll let you know then."

"Very well, then, if you *can't* make up your mind now," said Wilber after a pause.

II.

ROSEMARY tackled her husband directly the last guest had gone. He had come back into their rather untidy, deserted-looking drawing-room, and was standing, typically British-looking in a typical British attitude, with his back to the fire.

Rosemary faced him, and withstood the impulse to take hold of the points of his waistcoat. "I think," she said, "you've been horrid to me to-night, John."

"What?"

"You kept on making me look a little fool before all those people."

"Good Heavens! How? What's bitten you—eh, Tiny?"

Rosemary stamped her small foot. She had known he would be impervious like that!

John stretched forth a negligent arm and took a chocolate from a little dish. Eating it made his rugged sort of face look more rugged and nobbly and pleasantly, forcefully ugly than ever.

"I was thinking," he added when he could speak, "it had been a *topping* evening."

"Of course it was—for *you*. Everybody admired you—so you were happy! Yes; and all you want me for is to admire you too. Yes, it is! You don't take any notice of me—don't care a bit about me really. All you want me for is as an . . . audience. And—and as somebody to be funny about—like you were when you were telling them about my efforts to learn golf. I jolly well heard you—couldn't help it. I think you were beastly."

John shrugged his broad shoulders and began walking towards the door. "Dash it all, Buns," he said. "I'm *sorry*!"

Rosemary had to follow him. It passed through her mind regretfully that if she hadn't started this quarrel she would probably be now sitting happily curled up on his knee, discussing, with mutual amusement, their guests.

John went into his

and turn the taps on, there's a good girl!"

"I won't!"

"All right, then! I will."

Rosemary followed her husband into the



"John sat on the edge of the bath and patiently stroked the back of his head."

dressing-room, Rosemary still following. He took off his coat and waistcoat. "I'm going to have a bath," he announced. "Go

bathroom. She closed the door, and stood with her back to it, trying in her short evening frock to look stern.

"You look lovely like that," said John.
 "Never mind what I look like. You
 jolly well listen to me! Men like you,

think all women worship—worship Sheiks."
 "I've always been led to imagine so."



"Rosemary stopped breathless. Perhaps she had rather overstated her case."

John, imagine women like to be *run*. They think that if they behave thoroughly selfishly in a grand enough way, they're being kind to their wives. Yes, *kind*! They

said John affably.

"Have you? Well, you're wrong! At least, if they do, they—they like chivalrous ones. They like——"

But John, with a towel round his head, was being a Sheik. . . .

He advanced with a terrific frown. Rosemary collapsed—with laughter. She couldn't help it. She threw a sponge at him—it came back—and she ducked in time. . . .

Very nearly, the quarrel dissolved away in mirth. But then John said the wrong thing. He picked up the sponge, but failed to kiss her; and said, "You're tired, old thing; you'll feel all right in the morning!"

Rosemary tossed her head in disgust. She hadn't, she realised, made the faintest impression on him! He just wished to forget about it all, and for everything to be pleasant again.

"I'm not tired," she shouted above the noise of the running taps. "You just think I'm making a fuss about nothing!"

John carefully untied his tie.

"All I'm tired of is being thought just 'a sweet little thing', and—and living merely in your reflected glory. All you want is to have me to admire you and not have to give anything back in return yourself."

"Not at all!"

Rosemary held tight to the door-handle. She was beginning to make an impression!

"I don't believe you," she continued. "Everybody encourages you to be selfish because you—you do it so nicely. And you married me because you thought I'd be the sort to go on encouraging you. That's what you are, John—just selfish. Just out for yourself."

Rosemary stopped breathless. Perhaps she had rather overstated her case. . . . Her husband's mouth was set hard. She waited for him to say something.

But he didn't! A silence began; continued. . . . John just sat on the edge of the bath and patiently stroked the back of his head.

Rosemary leant with her hands flat against the door, biting her lip and staring without blinking straight in front of her. She knew just what John was thinking. He was thinking in a superior manner that she had got into one of those inexplicable women's tantrums, and that the only thing for him to do was not to say a word lest he should make it worse, but just sit tight till it blew over!

Rosemary was really angry now. She broke forth again. He had, she told John, been encouraged to be selfish all his life—his sister had encouraged him particularly.

He just couldn't do anything wrong in her eyes; and if she, Rosemary, didn't carry on the tradition, her sister simply thought she was awful. She thought she was awful, anyway—despised her because before she had married she had worked for her living—tried to make her feel she had married above her. . . .

Rosemary allowed herself to wander away from the point of the argument, became miserable and incoherent. . . .

And at last the two lay in bed, silent, unhappy, thinking their own thoughts. John, jolted out of his easy-going cheerfulness, was telling himself that this was serious—that there was something too, probably, in what old Rosemary said. But he was too newly married and too unused to compromise to conquer his stubbornness and seek forgiveness.

Rosemary, not very far from tears, was saying over and over to herself, "I *will* go to that rehearsal to-morrow, then! I *will*!"

III.

THE half-lit auditorium, so unaccustomedly empty, looked to Rosemary enormous. Paul Wilber, slim in his double-breasted suit, touching tenderly his side-whiskers—as if, Rosemary thought, he hoped they had grown since the last caress—sat down close beside her in the box.

"It's just the big scene they're going to do," he explained again rapidly. "They've got all the photo-taking and that sort of thing over at the full rehearsal. I'm so glad you've come. I want to see what you think. The play illustrates my beliefs as regards marriage, you know." He adjusted his tie and began explaining the action in detail to her.

Rosemary looked around her.

No orchestra; a brooding silence; just a few clumps of people, lost in the immensity, talking together like conspirators. It was all rather thrilling! . . . "And you see," Mr. Wilber was saying, "she then makes her choice. The hero, you understand, just wishes to serve her"—he leant forward eagerly and looked up at Rosemary's face. "He doesn't think, to put it succinctly, that loving women is a spare-time job but a whole-time job. He is not going to sacrifice her for his career or his popularity—his ideal, on the contrary, is a career which shares, combines with hers. I've embodied my ideals in my hero. I'm sure you must agree——"

Rosemary was thrilled by hearing a little bell ring. And then the curtain was silently rising, and the "big scene" had begun. . . .

Back at her flat Rosemary found her husband home and already in his Ruggier things and waiting lunch for her.

"Hello, where have *you* been?" he said. "I've been with a . . . friend."

look of him in those things immensely—she knew she did. Oh, why not be done with it all—why not make it up and have everything nice again?

"John, darling, shall I—may I come with you?"

John seemed to be thinking. "No," he said at last, "you wouldn't enjoy it a bit—honestly—you know you wouldn't."



"Rosemary ate a lonely and skimpy dinner, with a restless, taut feeling inside her all the time."

"Oh! Male?"

"Yes!" . . .

He wasn't, Rosemary realised, surprised in the least! He just looked—grim. He understood, then! . . . Rosemary experienced a kind of sickening feeling. But it was no good. No; he had got to be taught!

John finished his lunch quickly, and rose, wiping his mouth with his napkin. Rosemary looked up at him. Yes, she liked the

They looked at each other for a few moments. And then John went out of the door. . . .

Rosemary sat on; then finally went into her bedroom, and there sat looking at herself in the mirror of her dressing-table. . . .

But when Mr. Wilber came at half-past four to snatch two cups of tea and a large number of small cakes, she was fittingly dressed to receive him in a new tea-gown

—that suited “petite Madame” down to the knees.

“Then you’ll come!” ejaculated Wilber,—“oh, may I really take another?—you’ll come to-night! Don’t worry—I’ll get you a seat! Oh, and I say—I say—we’re having a supper afterwards. In the manager’s flat . . . over the theatre, you know . . . he and I are giving it. Will you come to that? Do say yes! You will? Oh, my dear lady, *splendid!* . . .”

At the very same moment, John, his game finished, was being appraised and apparently adored by the big, bright eyes of a certain leading lady of the stage. Even the mud on his vest seemed to be coming in for adoration. This lady liked Platonic admirers trailing around after her; and the loss of one whose magnificent bulk had been so excellent a contrast to her own charming slimmess had not been taken too lightly. “My dear man,” she was saying therefore, “my dear man, don’t be so hopelessly old-fashioned! Being married is no excuse *whatever* for deserting me all these months! . . .”

IV.

WHEN John got back to the flat Rosemary was already in her room, changing. She was slipping into a black frock, which had had many more guineas expended on the buying of it than it had had yards of silk on the making.

“Hello, what’s up now?” said John, standing in the doorway.

“I’m going out, after dinner.”

“Oh! With the same man?”

“Yes!”

“Well, I’m going out *to* dinner.”

The two looked at each other—for quite a long time. . . .

But nothing happened! Wherever, thought Rosemary, were they driving to? Why ever, in fact, had she been awakened at all to her true position by those two women talking in her bedroom?—she had been quite happy before. But that, of course, was being cowardly. John had got to be taught. . . . Still, though it was she who had started things moving, circumstances now seemed to be taking the control entirely out of her hands and to be running downhill with her with an acceleration due to—Heaven knew what! . . .

Rosemary ate a lonely and skimpy dinner, with a restless, taut feeling inside her all

the time. Then she took a taxi into the West End. It was funny, she thought, and not particularly amusing either, to be going about all in your best clothes in a taxi by yourself.

At the theatre it was all rather bewildering, and Mr. Wilber was rather difficult to find. When he did at last appear he was very kind and effusive, but also in a very great hurry. He dumped her into the stalls between a very large lady who stank of scent—not any particular kind of scent, Rosemary explained to herself, but just scent—and a still larger man with a chin which billowed into his neck. Rosemary sat and felt very little and lost, but nevertheless rather excited.

Then at last the orchestra stopped, the lights in the packed auditorium went out, there was a hush, and the curtain was going up. . . . Rosemary then knew immediately what she lacked. She lacked John beside her and being able to have her hand held by his! Well, well!—but it couldn’t be helped. She must attend to the play!

She found it interesting, and witty; but as it came towards the end of the first act she began to think it somehow too facile, even perhaps superficial.

When the curtain ran down, however, the audience seemed very well satisfied. After a few minutes Wilber came hurrying self-consciously towards her.

“Hello!” he said. “How are you getting on? I’m so sorry I couldn’t have you next to me. What do you think of it?—I say, I’m told the critics are impressed!” Rosemary, who had been wondering what she should say, felt on the whole relieved that he did not wait for her to give her opinion. “I shall probably have to make a speech,” Wilber continued. He looked round the theatre. “Well, I’m afraid I must go away. I’m frightfully sorry. This is an awfully important evening for me, you know. See you when it’s all over, shan’t I?”

He disappeared. “Of course,” Rosemary told herself, “you can’t expect him not to be in a hurry. But still . . .” She wondered what John was doing now, whoever it was he had gone out with. Presumably—yes, almost certainly—he was paying her back in her own coin! Oh dear, oh dear! She wasn’t enjoying herself a bit. . . . Intervals were dreary for girls at the best of times. . . . The huge man was squashing past her again, wiping his mouth. . . .

The last part of the play suffered, as far

as Rosemary was concerned, from having been seen only a few hours before.

But at last it was all over. The curtain was running down and everybody was clapping. The play was a success! Rosemary noticed that the gallery seemed rather unimpressed; but at least they weren't hissing, and the people who mattered, who would pay for the expensive seats, were enthusiastic. Everywhere there was noise and excitement; all the principals took innumerable calls; Paul Wilber made a speech—rather long.

And then the people were going. Rosemary let the fat man squash past her for the last time, and then sat down again and waited. She wondered what was going to happen now; presumably Wilber would come in a minute and fetch her. . . .

But all the same he didn't seem to be coming. The last people were squeezing out of the doors, somebody rushed back for his hat. . . .

And nothing happened! Rosemary began to feel really uneasy. In front of her a programme-girl was tipping up the seats with alarming rapidity; soon she would come to her row. Whatever should she do? Go? But that was so ignominious. Wilber would come soon.

"Excuse me!" said the girl, "are you waitink for anybody?"

"Yes . . . as a matter of fact . . . I'm waiting for Mr. Wilber."

"Oh, I see!" said the girl. "Do you mind if I tip your seat up?"

Rosemary stood now disconsolate in the wide empty aisle between the stalls, wondering what on earth to do. Some of the lights of the auditorium went out. Deserted, it all seemed, depressing—eerie! . . .

And then a door at the side of the stage was opened, and somebody came towards her. Rosemary recognised him as a youth who had had a minor part in the play.

"Mr. Wilber," announced the young man when he had reached her, "says he's most frightfully sorry he for—er, that you've been kept waiting. And will you please come up at once?"

Rosemary felt inclined to refuse. But, "Do come!" said the boy; and she turned and followed him. They went along a passage, very bare, then across the stage, still half lit and with everything in it looking to Rosemary surprisingly tawdry and unreal, and then up winding stairs. Half-way up her guide turned round and said: "When I came away, Christine d'Arblay—you know,

she's awfully famous, just left musical comedy—had come in to see Mr. Wilber. Apparently she came right away directly she heard of this success, especially to ask him to write a play for *her*. What do you think of that? Wilber's most terribly bucked."

"Oh!" said Rosemary to herself.

Then they were in the theatre-manager's drawing-room. It seemed to be full of people with two voices each. And, from what she could see of it through them, it was a most amazing place. The walls were covered with brilliant frescoes, the ceiling was pale blue, and gilt was splashed about everywhere. Through the crush of people standing about and drinking champagne, Rosemary could see a long table laid. The young man wormed his way through the mass, and Rosemary followed him. At last she spied Wilber, standing at the head of the table and bending over it to talk to the actress. Rosemary immediately began to study the girl who had helped Wilber to forget her. She was leaning over too, talking very prettily and very eagerly; and Wilber had obviously no ears for anyone but her at all. . . .

Then Rosemary, by now standing uncertainly behind the forgetful dramatist, looked for the first time beyond the actress. And there she saw a pair of very broad shoulders.

The owner of the shoulders turned round. . . .

It was John! . . .

For a moment, before his recognition, Rosemary saw her husband's unconscious expression. And he looked somehow just like a cat which has been suddenly and unexpectedly thrown off a so-far-hospitable lap!

Disconsolate husband and disconsolate wife stared at each other over and around the wagging, unconscious heads of those who had discarded them.

Then recognition dawned in John's countenance. First amazement; and then his whole face was lit up! . . .

At that moment Mr. Wilber turned round. "Oh, here you are at last," he said. "Let me introduce—"

John was standing beside her. "I think," said John clearly, "we'd better be going home."

Mr. Wilber's eyes goggled. "What?" he stammered. "Hello!—oh, I say—oh well!—another time perhaps—oh, good-bye!—I'm so sorry—but . . ." His voice trailed off into nothingness. . . .

V.

THE two didn't speak until they were close together in a taxi.

Rosemary, very big-eyed, stared in front of her. "We've both," she said solemnly, "had a very . . . illuminating lesson!" . . .

"Rosemary," said John equally solemnly, "I put you off coming to the Rugger match because I . . . thought it would be the very worst place for you to see me being . . . popular."

Rosemary, amazed, gave him her hand. . . .

"My dear old darling," he continued, "you've woken me up. See? You're quite right about me, you know—I *have* been brought up selfish. But I'm going to try and get over it. Yes, I am! You've

made me think, Rosemary . . . see that I've *got* to think—think about you—see your point of view. . . ."

Rosemary smiled up at him—so that John found it difficult to go on. . . .

"You know," he said at length, "all the—the basking in the other one's glory isn't only on your side, ducky. Why, the reason why I'm such a conceited man is just really because I'm so bucked at having married you! . . ."

Rosemary felt somehow near to crying. . . .

And then all of a sudden she was most tremendously glad that she was little!

"But, John," she said when she was able to, "supposing—supposing the driver turns round and *sees* me on your knee?"

"Do him good!" said John.



SEPTEMBER.

SUNFLOWERS along the fence, a golden row;
 In jewelled loveliness the dahlias glow;
 Michaelmas daisies, stars of lilac mist;
 And asters, pink and white and amethyst.

Our Summer roses linger with us yet;
 Our garden fragrant still with mignonette;
 And here, we know, Summer and Autumn meet,
 September! And the robins are so sweet!

L. G. MOBERLY.



"Mr. Van Doon grasped the situation with amazing penetration; he explained that, having just bought a steam yacht, he proposed leaving for a Mediterranean trip, and that he 'sort of wanted' a skipper. By the time the lacquer cabinet had been packed he had assured himself of Bill Standish's qualifications for the job."

VALUES

By PHILIPPA SOUTHCOMBE

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

"I'VE seen it," said Charles triumphantly, "so I know it's genuine."

The young man seated on the edge of the office desk balanced a paper-weight idly but steadily on his outstretched hand.

"I suppose they know it too," he murmured.

Charles smiled into space.

"Not they! Or at least—they've no idea what it is really worth. They've lived there all their lives—hidden away in that remote corner of rural England. It's twelve miles from anywhere—right off the beaten track—tucked away in a fold of the hills, all green and quiet—"

"Heavens! Are you a poet?" demanded the young man, still holding the paper-weight at arm's length. "You never told me. Of course it doesn't rhyme—but poetry never does nowadays. I suppose that was why you went there—"

"I went there because I heard a Marsh Warbler had been seen in the neighbourhood," said Charles curtly, and the young man looked at him with interest. For it was a never-ending source of surprise to others besides Bill Standish as indeed to him that Charles Castleton should have for a hobby the study of the wild birds of Great Britain. It did not in the least accord with his other vocations.

"And did you see it?" inquired Standish.

"No. I didn't stay, you see. It was when I went to this house in the hills to ask my way that I saw the lacquer cabinet. I had the opportunity of examining it—and there's not a doubt of its value."

"Then why didn't you make an offer for it?" asked Standish, who was, it seemed, a simple-minded and direct young man.

"I'm not a fool," retorted the other.

"I meant to make sure of a purchaser first—and I didn't want to—er—raise suspicions about the thing. So I hustled back to town and rang up Van Doon, the Canned Peach King—he's just taken up collecting—and got his offer up to £450. . . . I shall make a good thing out of this."

Bill Standish continued to look at him thoughtfully. "I see. And where do I come in?"

"I've told you. I want you to go down there——"

"And do the dirty work?"

Mr. Castleton made a large gesture of impatience.

"And make an offer. Don't be absurd! And for goodness' sake stop juggling with that thing and listen to common sense," he added irritably, casting a peevish glance at the rock-like steadiness of Bill's outstretched arm.

"You mean," said Bill, as he obligingly replaced the paper-weight, "that the plot is to buy the thing for an old song, and sell it for—an Hallelujah Chorus, don't you? High finance."

"It's a plain business deal," corrected Charles coldly, as if the word "plot" were wounding to his susceptibilities.

"Um! . . . But the present owners don't sound as if they understood plain business."

Charles shrugged.

"That's not my affair—or yours——"

"Ah!" said Bill brightly. "I knew you didn't really mean it to be mine, at any rate." But his heart sank as he saw that particular expressionlessness overspread Mr. Castleton's countenance. He knew its portent.

Charles Castleton leant back in his chair.

"The fact remains that during the past two years I have lent you a sum which you are totally unable to repay me. You have come here this morning, on your own confession, that you haven't a bean. This state of affairs is—unfortunate. . . ."

Bill Standish received this delicate reminder in silence. It was perfectly true and none the more palatable for that.

"In the words of melodrama—You have me in your power!" he said, with a lightness that he was very far from feeling. For he knew his Charles Castleton—at least as well as any in that gentleman's debt needed to know him; and it seemed to him that there was, indeed, no way out.

He could not pay what he owed Charles,

and he could not borrow from Charles any more to pay what he owed other people. He was not altogether to blame. The Irish grandfather who had bequeathed him careless improvidence, had also bequeathed him reckless generosity . . . and the unkind Fate that attends upon young men of such attributes, "axed" from the British Navy, had taken Bill's hand and led him, gently and imperceptibly, from the ante-rooms of the hard-up to the parlours of the broke.

"The place is twelve miles from a branch-line station," said Charles Castleton gravely. "But you can get a carrier as far as Long Millstock—that's the village nearest to the Miss Brownes' house."

"How many are there?" asked Bill apprehensively, yet feeling a vague relief in turning from the hopelessness of parrying the inevitable to the more practical details of the affair.

"Two. Sisters. Quite sensible young women—but, naturally, living as they have——"

"They have not come into contact with plain business men." Bill finished the sentence for him, and had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Castleton look, for a fleeting second, slightly disconcerted. After a pause the latter went on, meditatively:

"I think you'll find the darker one the best to—to—talk things over with. She's evidently the elder—which is a good thing—as *she* would naturally have the casting vote——"

"Why is it a good thing?" demanded Bill insistently. He hated the prospect of "talking over" a priceless lacquer cabinet with either a darker or fairer Miss Browne, but since the die was cast, he meant, at least, to be quite clear on all points of the affair.

"Oh, because she struck me as being more—persuadable—and, if anything, the less sophisticated of the two," said the observant Charles. "But of course you'll have to use your own discretion. And remember, you are not to mention my name or allude to my visit in any way. If they imagined I'd sent you, it might make them begin to think. You're on a walking tour—and you're interested in photographing picturesque old buildings, and you'd be so grateful if they would permit you to take an exposure of the old fifteenth-century barn adjoining the house." As he spoke Mr. Castleton was counting out a generous roll of Treasury notes.

"Your expenses," he explained, almost genially, as he pushed them across the desk. "And—by this agreement I undertake to cancel your debts to me immediately on your purchase of the cabinet, with a further commission on its re-sale—over which you need have no doubts, by the way. Van Doon is an assured purchaser."

There was a moment's silence, then Bill Standish, having stuffed the "expenses" in a battered pocket-book, slid to his feet. His leave-taking of Mr. Castleton was brief and untouched by regret; Mr. Castleton, on his side, did not rise from his chair.

At the door Bill paused.

"I will let you know if I see a Marsh Warbler," he said pleasantly, and went out before Charles could thank him for the kind thought.

* * * * *

Two days later a young man with a knapsack on his back and an overcasting of gloom on his pleasant countenance strode through the deep and narrow lanes in the warm September sunshine and thought that Long Millstock boasted a singularly apt prefix.

It was two o'clock, and he had been walking for an hour along the lane that, according to Mr. Castleton's directions, would eventually lead him to the abode of the Misses Browne. So far all it had done was to go up and down, steeply, three times, and to twist as if it were trying to catch its own tail. Bill Standish had accompanied its flippant wanderings faithfully, attended with equal faith and devotion by an ever-increasing cloud of flies. The camera with which he had provided himself (out of the expenses) rode buoyantly across his shoulder-blades. He felt that it was his sole link with honest purpose in the affair on hand. He could, at least, take many photographs of the fifteenth-century barn.

At which moment he came in sight of it, with a long line of swallows contemplating departure from its roof.

Planned in days when the locality had grown more corn, and when men built for spaciousness, solidity and endurance, the great barn seemed, indeed, almost to overshadow the long low dwelling that stood farther back from the lane, and had once been a farm-house—now the abode of the Misses Browne . . . and the shrine of the lacquer cabinet. The golden September sunlight touched to velvety half-tones of ochre and dove-grey the mellowed old West Country stone, and against it in a tangle

of colour, pink and purple of Michaelmas daisies shared the garden with flame-coloured snapdragons and great heavy-headed cactus dahlias in lilac and saffron and wine.

In the flagged yard, idyllically engaged in feeding the pigeons, were the Misses Judith and Griselda Browne.

It was not, of course, until later that Bill Standish could name them thus: in those first moments all he could do was to concentrate on Mr. Castleton's advice with regard to the darker Miss Browne. He was vaguely conscious that this was a deplorably inadequate description, for while the hair of one Miss Browne was merely sandy, that of the other was a deep, burnished chestnut. Only in one respect, it seemed, Charles had not erred: the glance of the Miss Browne whose hair was merely sandy held a degree of critical alertness, but her sister had the eyes of a dove.

To these, in accordance with instructions received, Bill Standish made his rehearsed request. He hoped that he spoke and looked plausibly like a photographer of fifteenth-century barns, but felt that something was putting him out of his stride—it may have been the dove-like glance of the darker Miss Browne, or the pretty way in which one of the white fantails alighted on her shoulder in the middle of his speech.

However, the Misses Browne saw fit to grant his request and watched with interest while he unslung the camera and gazed long and sternly at the barn. All the time, as he moved from one viewpoint to another, he was wondering how he was going to get an introduction to the lacquer cabinet. Charles had told him that it stood in the wide panelled passage upon which the door opened; this fact, indeed, had influenced him in his belief that the Misses Browne were ignorant of its great value.

But, although the door stood open, it was not near enough for anyone to see within, and when he had photographed the barn from every possible angle, Bill realised that, unless he could think of an immediate excuse to prolong his visit, the whole object would suffer defeat. With the courage of desperation he suggested that he might photograph the Misses Browne and their pigeons "with the barn for a background"—as if it were a sort of chaperon.

The Misses Browne graciously acceded to the proposal, and Bill noted with approval

the unaffected simplicity with which they posed for him. He could have wished it otherwise, since to approve those whom you are about to swindle is not a happy state of affairs.

Putting his camera carefully away in the knapsack, he looked up at the sky, whose cloudless blue promised no fortuitous thunder-shower from which he might pray for shelter. Then the Miss Browne whose hair was merely sandy asked him if he would care to take an exposure of the old stone fireplace they had in the house; the date and initials of the builder of the farm were carved upon it, and he would, she was sure, appreciate it.

Bill Standish hoped that neither Miss Browne observed the relief which, he felt, must have showed in his face at this most welcome suggestion. On the way to the house he made the discovery that the Miss Browne with the chestnut hair was Judith, and she whose hair was merely sandy, Griselda, which seemed, somehow, the wrong way about. Remembering Charles's instructions, he was relieved when, on entering the doorway, it was the former who acted as chief cicerone, while Miss Griselda Browne fetched him cool amber cider in a fat willow-patterned jug.

There in the panelled passage, as Charles had said, stood the lacquer cabinet.

The voice of Miss Judith was as dove-like as her eyes; its wooing tones fell on the ear of Bill Standish as she pointed out the features of the stone-carving on the fireplace, but the words she spoke, it must be confessed, got only half his attention. More than ever he hated his errand, but he'd given his word to Charles, and besides, had added to those already exten-

sive debts the "expenses" of the expedition.

He drew a long breath and squared his shoulders.

"I see—I mean I'm very much interested in old lacquer," he said.

"Oh!" said Miss Judith, looking at him



"Mr. Kermit P. Van Doon of Stockton, Cal., saluted the Misses Browne with a pleasant deference that in any other circumstances Bill might have approved."

with the light of innocent pleasure in her big grey eyes. "Now that's really very fortunate. We've got a lacquer cabinet—our grandfather brought it from China many years ago—perhaps you noticed it as you came in?"

Bill admitted, almost breathlessly, that he had. It seemed as though his mission might prove easier than he hoped—that—

"We should be so grateful," said Miss Judith Browne, "if you would tell us what you consider it is worth. We were speaking of it only the other day."

Into the countenance of Bill Standish

came the beautiful colour of the field poppy. Here, so to speak, was his hand forced upon him, and in honour bound to Charles Castleton he'd got to play this stupid game of beggar my neighbour—though his neighbour had the eyes and voice of a dove. . . .

bright spot in the whole affair was his own genuine ignorance concerning the worth of lacquer; but as he stared and stared at the exquisite colouring and workmanship, he could not but be instinctively aware that this, at least, must be no inferior example of its kind. And Charles had said—

Having committed Charles, silently, to the company of the Chinaman, he decided to get it over as soon as possible. He shook his head sadly.

"I'm sorry, Miss Browne. But I'm obliged to tell you that—in my opinion—your cabinet—is not, I regret to say, of any particular value . . . say £20. . . ."

Miss Judith gave a little cry.

"Only that! And—we thought—we hoped—Griselda and I . . ."

"Well—perhaps £25," said Bill hastily, "or even £30. You—you might get that, you know."

"Oh, Judy!" wailed the Miss Browne whose hair was merely sandy, tragically. "Oh, Judy! What shall we do?"

There was a brief poignant silence. Then Bill said, tonelessly:

"I'll tell you what. . . . If—if you are anxious to sell the cabinet—it's a—

a pretty thing, anyway, even if it's not—not valuable—I'll give you £35 for it."

"£35!" said Judith. She lifted her great grey eyes to his . . . and Bill remembered the occasion when his ship had been torpedoed. . . . She gave a queer little broken laugh.

"What shall we do? We sold it yesterday for £450."

"Did you?" said Bill weakly.

"To an American," explained Judith. "He seemed such a nice, kind man . . . but not very—I mean, I think he had more money than—than knowledge of things like this. He offered us the money. It did seem a lot. In fact, we've been wondering



"But the American's greeting was cut short by Judith, who, with her grey eyes wide with dismay, but resolutely lifted head . . . was telling him that, after all, the sale of the lacquer cabinet must be re-discussed—because she'd just been told it was worth, not £450, but £30."

It was an unenviable moment in the career of Bill Standish.

"You see," went on the gentle voice, "we have no one to advise us—no one who has any knowledge of old lacquer. And the cabinet is one of our few treasures left." She checked a sigh. "It would be the greatest kindness if you would give us at least an idea of its value."

Bill Standish stood before the lacquer cabinet and silently confounded the spirit of the Chinaman who had been responsible for its existence, an exercise which may have soothed, but did not help. The one

ever since whether we ought to take it. You see, he insisted on writing out the cheque—and said he'd come and fetch the cabinet away to-day. But of course, it would be dreadful to take £450 . . . for something worth £30."

Bill put a hand to his head.

"I wonder—would you mind telling me his name?"

"Kermit P. Van Doon," said Judith readily.

"Of Stockton, Cal.," amended Griselda gravely. She turned her head as if to listen. "There's a car coming up the lane. That will be Mr. Van Doon, Judy."

Bill Standish felt the slim fingers of Miss Judith Browne grip his sleeve.

"You—you *are* quite sure, aren't you? Because, of course, we shall have to return his cheque. We couldn't——"

A thin grey man came up the garden path, followed by a liveried chauffeur. Mr. Kermit P. Van Doon of Stockton, Cal., saluted the Misses Browne with a pleasant deference that in any other circumstances Bill might have approved. But the American's greeting was cut short by Judith, who, with her grey eyes wide with dismay, but resolutely lifted head (glowing chestnut red against the dark panelling), was telling him that, after all, the sale of the lacquer cabinet must be re-discussed—because she'd just been told it was worth, not £450, but £30.

Mr. Van Doon looked very hard, first at Miss Judith Browne, then at the lacquer cabinet, then at Bill Standish. Then he smiled grimly.

"You been handing out that tall tale?" he accused Bill.

Bill nodded. To the amazement and bewilderment of the Misses Browne, and perhaps of Mr. Van Doon, his countenance betrayed candid relief.

"Yes. But it's not true, of course."

He knew the dove-like glance of the elder Miss Browne was upon him, and avoided it.

"Tall tales usually ain't," said Mr. Van Doon crisply. "But I guess I don't need you to put me wise, young man. Mr. Charles Castleton, of London, saw a similar cabinet four days ago, and he put a price to it that wasn't £30. He said he'd get it for me. Well, after he'd gone, I sure did some considering. Somehow I'd got a sort of hunch things weren't quite square. I'm all for a good business deal, but there are limits Kermit P. Van Doon *don't* over-

step—and it happened I'd heard a thing or two about Charles that made me sit up and take notice. I'd thought it'd be good if I just took a look round myself. By chance I met a man that's doing illustrations for a bird-book, and he mentioned Charles had been in these parts—looking for a rare bird. Then I got to figuring things out—and I trailed him right here. When I saw the cabinet I felt justified in making the offer I did—at the price quoted by Charles. If I found Charles had been playing fair I intended squaring with him—paying him a good commission. But I guess it wouldn't have been the difference between £30 and £450. . . . So now, young lady, quit worrying and do Kermit P. Van Doon the honour of shaking hands on his deal." . . . He turned again to Bill. "I reckon Charles Castleton sent you here," he said cheerfully. "You don't look mean enough for the idea yourself. . . . Say now, if you get it off your chest you'll feel a heap better."

Bill got it off his chest . . . with as little discredit to Charles Castleton as was possible, a fact which part, at least, of his audience did not fail to observe.

Ten minutes later, upon the request of Mr. Van Doon, he agreed to a little business talk with the latter while the Misses Browne proceeded with the packing of the cabinet.

Mr. Van Doon grasped the situation with amazing penetration; he explained that, having just bought a steam yacht, he proposed leaving for a Mediterranean trip, and that he "sort of wanted" a skipper. By the time the lacquer cabinet had been packed he had assured himself of Bill Standish's qualifications for the job, and himself informed the Misses Browne of his decision. He proposed to take the young man "right along" with the cabinet . . . and in the meantime, would Miss Griselda give him a souvenir of the occasion in one of those dandy yellow flowers over there by the wall?

A somewhat dazed Bill Standish found himself momentarily alone with Judith. He said unhappily:

"You won't want to—to shake hands, of course, now you know what a rotten game I played. I'm not going to make excuses—Van Doon's been a brick—and I shall be able to pay off Charles—and——"

"As a matter of fact," said Miss Browne, rather hurriedly, "I—I must tell you that—I really knew the value of the cabinet all the time. If Mr. Van Doon had offered

me less I shouldn't have taken it. But I sort of knew he'd be honest, directly he spoke. As for that other man, who came the other day, and talked about birds—and looked at the cabinet out of the corner of his eye all the time," continued the unsophisticated Miss Browne in her dove-like voice, "somehow I felt I wouldn't trust *him* farther than I—I mean you—could kick him down the garden path. . . ."

"Oh!" said Bill. He was startled, but more in love than ever. "But if you knew—why did you—pretend—to believe me?"

For the first time the colour deepened in her face.

"Because I—I—couldn't understand—I

couldn't decide whether *you* really knew or not. You see, your coming so soon after Mr.—Castleton seemed—funny. Strangers come here so seldom. I felt you *might* be connected, and yet—and yet—oh! I *wanted* to believe you were—honest."

For a moment Bill looked down in silence into the grey eyes. Then he said:

"Mr. Van Doon wants to get under way on the first of October. We touch at Villefranche first. Would you . . . I mean—may I—may I—"

For the second time the feminine intuition of the elder Miss Browne triumphed. She held out her hand.

"You may send me a picture postcard from Villefranche," she said gravely.



THOUGHTS CONCERNING MY DUSTMAN.

HIS eyes see uncouth shapes ;
His hands must handle grime ;
His nose must sense unfragrant things,
Most of the time.

All this, that I may dream
Of loveliness and grace ;
That nought unseemly shall come near
My own fastidious face.

He shoulders slow decay,
Tarnished and undivine,
That scent and symmetry may stay
And still be mine.

Could any king bestow
More kindness, greater bliss ?
Could an archangel hope to bring
A greater boon than this ?

FAY INCHFAWN.

*Author of "Poems from a Quiet Room," "Songs of the Ups and Downs,"
"Sweet Water and Bitter," etc.*



WOMAN THE CONSOLER.

WIFE (to Batsman, out first ball): Hard luck, dear!—but what a delightful fellow that bowler seems—he gave you such a charming smile!

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

NO GENTLEMAN.

By B. A. Clarke.

NOT having any other boarders, Mrs. Turner devoted herself to me conversationally (in other respects she was of the type of landlady who can't do enough for her guests and doesn't try to), her one and inexhaustible topic being her great boarders of the past. To this succession she admitted a Mr. Musgrave, although only of this season's vintage and with a bare week's stay to his credit.

"Ah, he was real gentry if you like," said my landlady admiringly, "and accustomed to being waited upon. How he came to be travelling without his valet I never understood, but you could see it was a new experience for him. He was knocked all of a heap when asked to put his boots out to be cleaned. And when he did put them out, with them he put out a suit of clothes to be brushed. Turner brushed his clothes although, of course, we don't reckon to valet our guests. You see he wasn't like you business gentlemen. I don't believe he *could* have brushed his own clothes."

"Very creditable," I murmured.

"It was the same with shaving. He was for ever appearing with new dabs of black court-

plaster on his face until I sent Turner up to shave him. And so affable he was with it all. When Turner asked him if he would mind appearing in a lounging and gentlemanly pose on the front step in a photograph of the house we were having taken, he consented at once. It came out very well, I think you will agree."

"Why, bless my heart," I exclaimed, when the photograph had been handed to me, "that is our grocer!"

"Impossible."

"Why impossible? Grocers can be slim and debonaire."

"Oh, but the boots—the shaving—everything?"

"Easily explained. This, I happen to know, was the first holiday he had ever permitted himself. He didn't know, therefore, that by putting his boots out he could have them cleaned. When he made the discovery he fancied the same boarding-house custom applied to cloth clothes. As for his shaving mishaps, I attribute those to his never before having been indulged with hot water. Cold-water shavers experimenting with hot almost invariably scrape themselves. He accepted your husband's ministrations because, for all he knew, such were customary."

"Well, he took us in for sure."

"I don't believe for a minute he did so intentionally. He is an awfully good chap."

I told her how good Musgrave had been to his mother, bedridden and exacting. I mentioned how, passing Musgrave's house one morning before seven, I had seen him in a servant's apron hearth-stoning the front steps, and learned that he was doing this to hold the situation for their little servant who was suffering with neuritis and whom his mother would certainly dismiss if aware of her incapacity.

"I expect you were surprised also to hear me singing so lustily," Mr. Musgrave said. "That

My frock, an exclusive creation,
Was a dream of the purest delight,
Which explains my stern determination
To enjoy myself fully to-night.

But now all my pleasure is over;
This dance is a terrible show,
And I'm living in Hades—not clover—
It's time and high time I should go.
How can I be carefree and merry
When I've seen not one fewer than nine
Replicas here of that very

"Exclusive" new dance frock of mine!

Bruce Woodhouse.



SEASIDE DEVELOPMENTS.

SHE: They seem to have fewer lights here than they used to have.
HE: Oh, yes. They've improved the place a lot lately!

was to reassure poor little Jane, who is disposed to fret at her helplessness—to show her that the work is no burden to me."

Mrs. Turner snorted.

"And to think that I mistook him for a gentleman!"



THE MAIDEN'S LAMENT.

My heart is deep-laden with sorrow
And life is a mock and a snare,
I gaze on a hopeless to-morrow
Seeing no sort of happiness there.
In one little hour all my pleasure
Has fled like the mists of the dawn,
Now I'm tasting Grief's cup to full measure
And wishing I'd never been born.

I entered the ballroom serenely,
No girl was more sure of herself,
For I felt far too pretty and queenly
To spend half the night on the shelf.

AN article in a daily paper says that plants become exhausted in a closed room crowded with people.

That is why we never take our aspidistra to the pictures.



DINER: I've just found a large piece of wire in this spring chicken, waiter!

WAITER: Sorry, sir; they must have left a bit of the spring in.



"We have ampelopsis veitchii creeping all over our house."

"That's the worst of those old houses; you are bound to get something like that."

A PIRATICAL ACADEMY.

MODERN educationalists are all agreed that in the matter of choosing a profession a boy should be allowed to follow his own bent. Yet how often it happens that a boy whose one ambition in life is to become a pirate is forced into the ranks of stockbrokers, chartered accountants and other overcrowded callings, solely owing to the lack of training facilities to fit him for a piratical career.

Is it too much to expect that this want will one day be met, and that anxious parents will

The art of carrying a cutlass in the mouth.
Short-range pistol-firing.

Special instruction in Captain Kydd's method of inducing prisoners to walk the plank.

Foreign exchanges: Conversion of doubloons and pieces of eight into sterling.

Approved methods of concealing treasure.

Island plan-drawing.

Examinations each term in elementary and advanced piracy.

A preparatory department for small boys under the personal supervision of Mrs. Hook.



THE MODERN WIFE'S ALTERNATIVE.

HUSBAND: Hang it—we can't go dancing after all; I've got holes in the heels of all my socks!
MODERN WIFE: Oh, well—we'll go to the pictures.

be able to obtain a prospectus something like the following:

**SKULL & CROSS-BONES COLLEGE,
PENZANCE.**

Principal: CAPTAIN HOOK,

Assisted by a competent staff of certified
Buccaneers.

Syllabus:—

Elements of navigation applicable to sloops
and fore-and-aft schooners.

Costume and Deportment.

(All pupils will be required to have their ears
pierced.)

THE EARLY CLOSING FLOWER.

BELINDA is so proud of the *Eschscholtzia* which is now in full bloom in the garden. She is not equal to pronouncing the name and if visitors admire the gaudy orange flowers and ask what they are called she runs in and gets the empty seed packet and hands it round.

I have told her that their ordinary everyday name is Californian Poppy, but she says that doesn't sound half so thrilling.

We now come to the strange part of this short story. The peculiarity of these flowers is that they all close up promptly at five o'clock every evening. Happening to go into the garden

about one o'clock the other afternoon, I noted with surprise that the blooms were all tightly shut. On calling Belinda's attention to this remarkable phenomenon, she stared in amazement and then gasped: "What's to-day? Thursday! Oh, how wonderful; it's the local early closing day!"



THE FATAL WORD.

If you must have a pet adjective, do be careful not to work it to death. I told you once about a young woman whose favourite expression was "jolly"; how her fiancé mentioned that he was going to attend his aunt's funeral, and she exclaimed, "How jolly!"

Now we have the sad case of Charles to whom

bricks, earth, stones and garden rubbish without any apparent result, Uncle asked for voluntary contributions. So we all added our mite in the form of decayed door-mats, empty tins, broken crockery and ancient boots, but still the yawning chasm gapes for more.

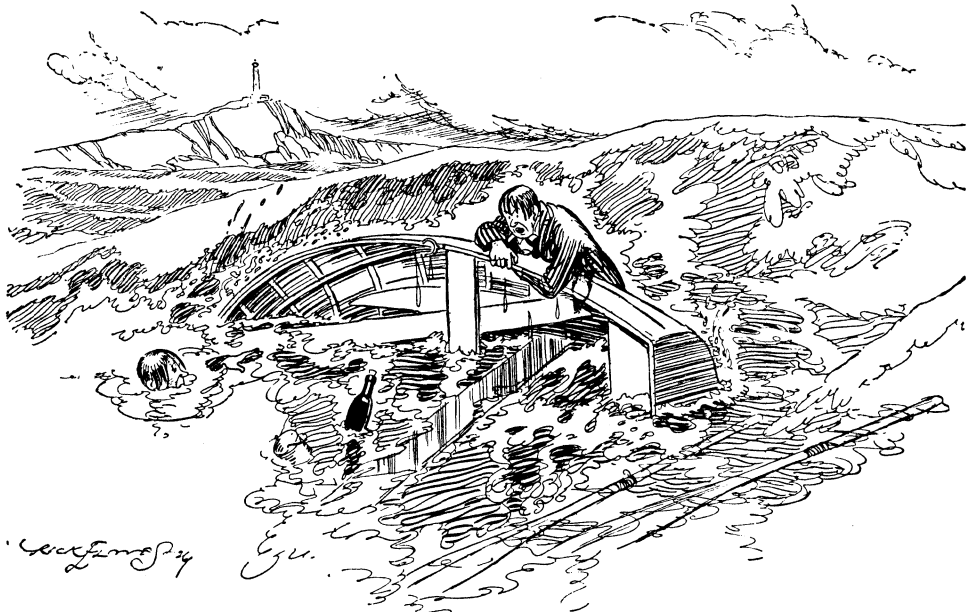
In the end I believe he will have to turn it into a lily-pond, or a permanent depot for the reception of discarded safety-razor blades.



"GREAT Scot! What on earth has that fool of a jeweller been playing at with this ring?" exclaimed a young man, gazing at the engagement ring in his hand.

"What's the trouble?" asked his friend.

"Why, I told him to engrave 'From A to Z'



EASILY SAID . . .

THE ONE ON THE WRECK: I'll hold the boat. You get the oars.

everything is "immense," or rather, was, for he has been cured of that view of life by a bitter experience.

This is how it happened. He was at a dance with the one and only girl for him, and she asked very sweetly, "How do you like my new shoes?"

Charles said, "They're immense!"



UNCLE'S GRAVEL-PIT.

HAVE you ever embarked on the hopeless task of filling up a large hole in the garden? This is the problem which now confronts Uncle Thomas. He very kindly volunteered to regravell our garden paths and undertook to extract the necessary material from the bowels of the earth.

All went well until it came to filling up the pit. After hurling in all the available half-

—from Arthur to Zena—on the inside of it, and the idiot has put in the whole blooming alphabet."



"My dear," said Mrs. Brown to her husband, speaking of a near neighbour, "I believe Mrs. Jenkins is offended about something. She hasn't been to see us for several days."

"Be sure," said Brown, "to find out what it is when she comes, and we'll try it on her again."



SHE: Do you care if I smoke?

HE: Do, by all means. I like the smell of it, though I don't smoke myself, but all my sisters do.

GUILTY!

By W. E. Richards.

"PLEASE, sir, there's a policeman downstairs," gasped the little maid.

My hand slipped. It's wonderful what a gash can be made with a safety-razor.

"Right," I said, in a voice which wasn't mine. "I'll be down in a second."

Five minutes before I had been splashing happily, singing "A Life on the Ocean Wave," and now my little world was dashed in ruins.

Patricia was, I hoped, sleeping happily. Let her dream on, while dreams were possible.

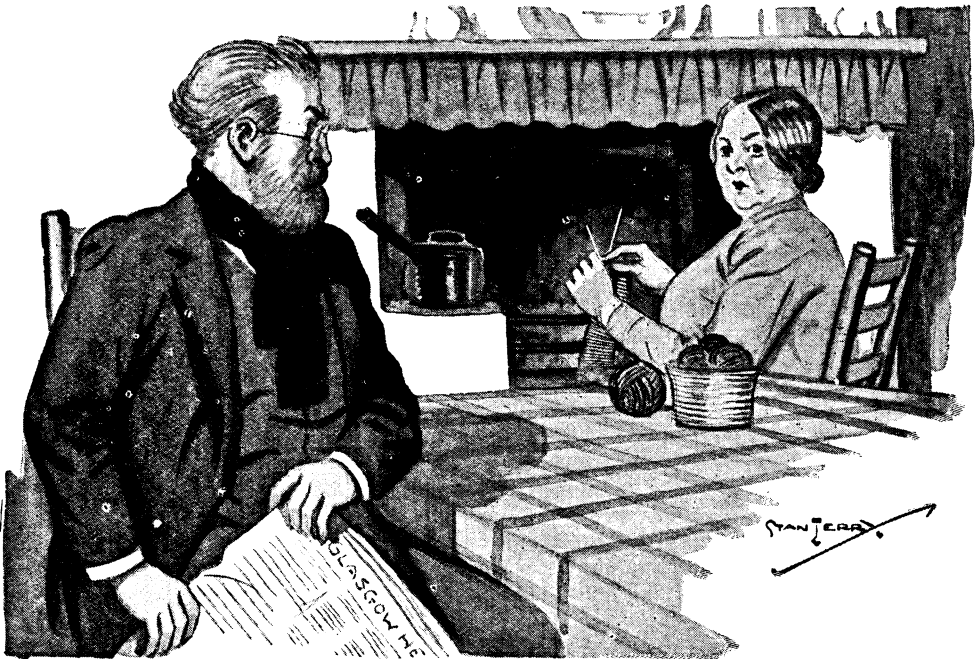
Downstairs the servants would be whispering together. I could almost hear cook saying, "I

the fence the very moment I walked out with the constable.

"Morning," he would sing out in his ridiculous breezy manner, "topping day. Oh, I beg pardon," as if he had only just caught sight of the policeman. He was that sort of man.

He would hasten to his office to spread the glad tidings. And on the way he'd be bound to chat with the *Gazette* reporter. By lunch a special edition would be on the streets, and newsboys would shout, "Arrest of a local solicitor! Astounding disclosures! Extry special!"

Old Miss Briggs opposite would be already concealed behind those lace curtains which are designed to allow respectable persons to pry on



IT ALL DEPENDS.

DONALD: I dinna see hoo we can gang tae th' seaside this year, Maggie.

WIFE: Och, Donal', we maun go on the childer's account.

DONALD: Aye—but hae they that much i' th' Post Office?

never did like the looks of him." She was that kind of woman.

"Poor lamb," I imagined the parlour-maid saying, "sleeping innocent-like upstairs while he's—"

"You heard what he was singing?" cook would reply. "'A Life on the Ocean Wave.' That means he was going to do a bunk. And he wouldn't be going alone. Not him. There's a woman in it, you mark my words. Now, Martha, don't stand gaping there while your betters are talking." The conversation would sink to whispers.

Jones would be out there pottering in his front garden. Confound the fellow! Why couldn't he water his petunias at a respectable hour? He would, of course, contrive to be at

their neighbours. While Jones spread the news on the street, she would pass it along the row of back gardens. Maids would gossip over privet hedges while nurses would dash out with their perambulators to carry the news still farther afield.

Confound the razor! What did it matter how I looked? I finished dressing just anyhow and wrenched my tie into a horrible knot.

A warning cough from the hall. The limb of the law was growing impatient. I still hesitated. Perhaps my tie was a mistake. Appearances count so much that one cannot be too careful.

Not my Old Boys' tie. Better not drag the old school into it. Something quiet yet confident. I chose it with care, and tied it with trembling hands. The hesitating shuffle of the little maid sounded on the stairs.

"Coming," I called in a hoarse whisper.

The constable cleared his throat in a terrifying manner. To hesitate further was a sign of weakness. I pulled myself together and stumbled down the stairs.

A giant of a man rose from his chair in the hall. My knees turned to water.

"Well?" I gasped with a dry throat.

"What time did you leave your office last night, sir?" he boomed.

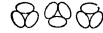
"About eight. No, let me see," I gasped guiltily, "about seven-thirty."

"Were you the last to leave, sir?"

I saw I had committed myself. I licked my parched lips.

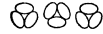
"Er—yes, I think I was," I stammered. "I was working late."

A MANUFACTURER announces the invention of an indestructible collar. But what we are looking for is a collar that will not grow whiskers in its old age.



AN advertisement in a weekly paper says: "Lady desires post; domesticated, fond of cooking children."

We shouldn't trust her to mind the baby.



PROUD MOTORIST: You'd never think this car was a second-hand one, would you?

CANDID FRIEND: No; it looks as if you had made it yourself.



PLAY THE GAME!

"It ain't out; you said 'is back!'"

"And did you lock up?" he demanded.

"Er—of course. That is, I think so."

The net was closing round me.

"And what about the key, sir?"

I felt in my pocket. It was gone.

"Right, sir," he said cheerfully. "Call at the station and sign the book, sir, and your key will be returned. Found in the lock, sir. Warm this morning, sir," and he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"Constable," I gasped, feeling for a chair.

"What we both need is a drink!"

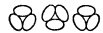


"EVERY boy born in this land has a chance of becoming Prime Minister," remarks an essayist. Fortunately very few babies know about this handicap.

MRS. JEFFREYS: This time I've really been lucky. My new girl is a find. She's clean, economical, industrious and very reliable.

MRS. ELLIS: How long have you had her?

MRS. JEFFREYS: She's coming to-morrow.

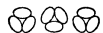


CUSTOMER: Is my suit pressed?

TAILOR: Not yet.

CUSTOMER: You promised to have it pressed if you worked all night.

TAILOR: Yes, but I didn't work all night.



"I SUPPOSE you find your wife can live on your income all right?" asked a friend.

"Oh, yes, indeed," replied the newly-wed, "but it's up to me now to make another one for myself."

WE read that thousands of income-tax forms have been destroyed by rats. This looks like an attempt on the part of the despised rodents to justify their existence before Rat Week comes round again.



A FISHY FASHION.

(Shellfish hat trimmings are the latest whim of fashion.)

Phyllis for up-to-dateness has a passion,
She'd just as soon be dead as out of fashion;
And as she's up to all the newest wrinkles,
Her latest hat is festooned round with winkles.

Said Phyllis, incorrectly, "Shall I see
Myself outdone by Mrs. Brown? Not me!



TO SUIT THE SITUATION.

BOATMAN: There used to be plenty o' fish in these waters, miss, but now them 'ere turbines 'ave been dumpin' their oil 'ereabouts, they've all been killed.

ANGELA: Then, Mr. Bowline, why don't you get the authorities to stock the sea with sardines?

She's got a hat with shrimps stuck on the brim,
With fishy fads one must be in the swim."

I greatly fear that fashion, by-and-by,
Will soar above the ocean's smaller fry,
And soon will come the moment that I dread,
When Phyllis wears a lobster on her head.

Suppose upon my bowler hat one day,
A solitary prawn I should display,
Or one small crab for all the world to see,
I wonder, what would Phyllis say to me?

R. H. Roberts.

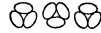


THE Vicar's wife was very enthusiastic and appreciative about the new curate, and when she called on an old lady parishioner she soon turned the conversation in his direction.

"You know," she said, "he is capable in

so many ways. But what I like about him most of all is that he is a real altruist."

"Well, I'm surprised to hear that," exclaimed the old lady, "for I heard him singing last Sunday, and I could declare he was a tenor."



A SAILOR fell off his ship on to the quay and injured his hand. A week later, when he was getting better, he asked the doctor, anxiously:

"When this hand of mine gets well, shall I be able to play the banjo?"

"Certainly you will," said the doctor.

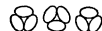
"Thanks, you're a wonder," said the sailor.
"I never could before."

THE chemist was becoming wearied. He had been explaining and pricing dozens of articles to the shopper, who didn't really want to buy anything at all. Finally she picked up a bottle.

"Is this pest exterminator reliable?" she asked. "How is it applied?"

"You take a tablespoonful every half-hour, ma'am," the chemist replied, with fiendish emphasis.

No more questions were asked.



WIFE: You didn't make any horrid bets, did you?

HUSBAND: I'm not that extravagant, dear. I just let the other fellows make bets with me.

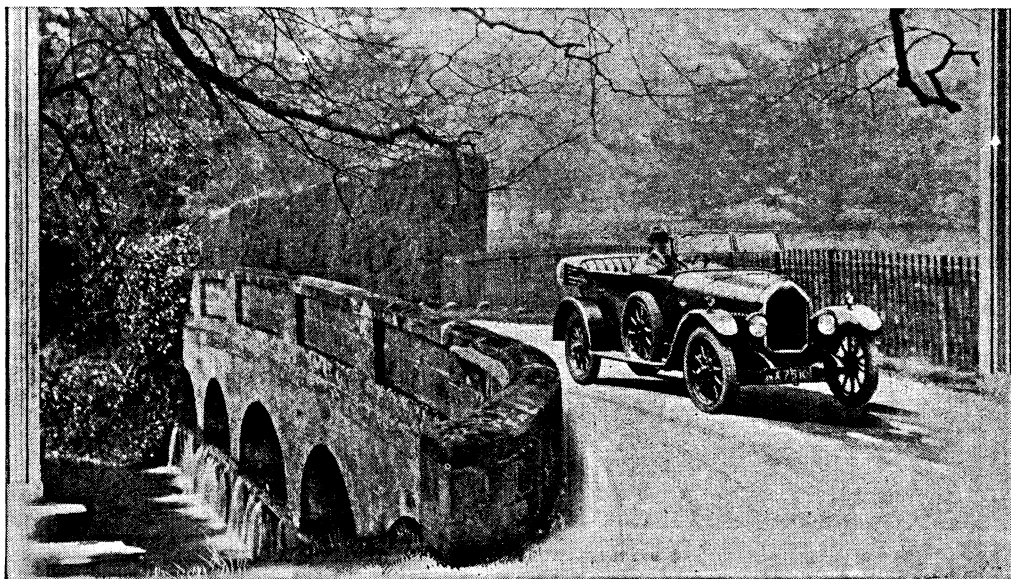
MOTORING AS I VIEW IT.

BY CECIL B. WATERLOW.

It is sometimes hard to give reasons for what one does or wants to do—reasons that are not only reasonable, but which also satisfy the moral sense and fit in with one's general outlook on life. As a matter of fact, I have been taken to task lately, whilst touring in France in my faithful little car, and made to justify my ferocious love of motor touring in general. My taskmaster and companion was a very high-minded person, which put me at disadvantage from the start; but a high mind may also be an open one, capable of conversion by force of

with perverted ingenuity. Nothing could or can alter the fact that I always want to see the country beyond the hills, and always imagine that it will have a lot that is good to show.

We had just landed at le Havre and were setting out to cross northern France, making for the Alps, and then the Mediterranean, incredibly colourful in summer sunshine, and then along the Pyrenees to the Atlantic at Biarritz, and so home again after a circuit of the mountains of France. My little car, costing only £220 when new, had 16,000 good miles to



WITH A HUMBER 12/25 H.P. TOURER AT COMITON VERNEY, WARWICKSHIRE.

circumstances rather than by such reasoning as I could apply.

"Time is precious," I argued; "and once you have tasted blood—begun to see the world in a motor-car, that is—the urge to be at it again is almost irresistible."

The high-minded companion had never owned a car, or even been for a very long trip in one before; so he began by adopting a questioning attitude.

"Are you likely to get much better value out of life far away than near your own home? Have you never heard of the French philosopher who wrote a whole book about travelling round his own room?"

Of course I knew well enough that what one finds far away is not necessarily any better than one's home surroundings; but the French philosopher seemed to me to have been afflicted

its credit as it plunged along a rather bumpy road up the Seine valley towards Rouen, at a speed seldom exceeding thirty miles an hour. The road ran in immensely long straight stretches through vistas of poplars, disappearing into the blue distance, and I said:

"I wish we had a Big Six Bentley, a Straight-Eight Panhard, or Isotta-Fraschini, because, in such a car, we should get along this road at sixty or seventy miles an hour without feeling the bumps, and we should reach the fringe of the Alps this very day. That is one of the reasons why I should like to be rich—something that keeps alive the ambition to gain wealth. Surely it is not a bad thing that that ambition should be kept alive. The world could not make any progress if people were to leave off wanting things and trying to get them."

THE WINDSOR MAGAZINE.

"Your ambition to own whatever juggernaut you may fancy, is ignoble. You just want to possess, for selfish ends. You ought not to put the craving for possessions above the desire to benefit humanity and the world at large. You ought to want to *be* a benefactor, rather than to *have* the benefits of this world. It is better to *be* than to *have*."

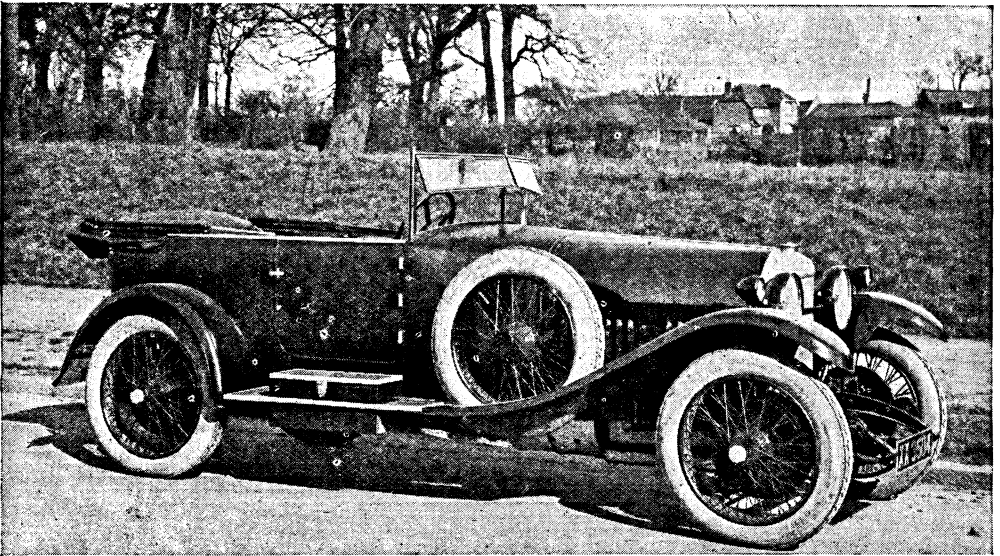
"You are right, of course; but so am I. If we had the big, swift, expensive car and were sweeping smoothly along this road at seventy miles an hour, then we should both of us really begin to *be*. We should begin to exist in a different world—"

"After the first corner most probably!"

"There would be a new zest in life; and we, having preserved so far an ample capacity for appreciation, would gain by it enormously."

brilliant summer morning. And from this point onwards, scenes that were wonderfully fresh to my companion so occupied our attention that the discussion was not continued until, a few days later, we stopped for the first time for more than one night in the same place.

We spent two nights at the most astounding place. I was astounded afresh—I always am—although I had often stayed there before. We were at a rather primitive chalet hotel right on the saddle of the Col du Lautaret, 7,000 feet up in the Dauphiny Alps. We came to it slowly, grinding on first speed up the magnificently engineered road, I longing again to possess that superior, expensive car which would go up in an easy, effortless way. There were superb peaks and glaciers just outside our windows it seemed, and rolling, grassy slopes lower down,



A BENTLEY TWO-SEATER TOURING CAR.

"Human capacity for appreciation is very limited. Already I am getting a little confused with all that I have seen since we left home. Going along like this, comparatively slowly in a little cheap car, is quite good enough for me. With the Alps, the Mediterranean and the Pyrenees in prospect, I am bound to have mental indigestion before long."

"Good! You'll get over that and be all the better for it—all the more hungry afterwards. You'll begin quite soon, I expect, by buying a small car and driving your family about to lots of places that could never be seen without a motor-car."

We came at last to a bend in the long straight road, round which the broad blue and silver band of the Seine gleamed through poplars and willows, with white cliffs to the left and forests beyond, fading into immensely spacious blue distances, shimmering in the sunshine of a

covered with flowers—narcissus, anemones, gentians of all sorts, wild pansies, and hundreds of other kind. You cannot imagine the profusion, even though the guide-books tell you that the region is unsurpassed for the richness of its Alpine flora.

My companion, it seemed to me, was at first somewhat unreasonably—in the rarefied atmosphere of 7,000 feet above sea level it often seems that other people are unreasonable. He was inclined to recant his partial conversion to the joys and benefits of motoring for people of modest means. He regretted that it should be possible to get up to such celestial solitudes in an automobile. Here, with a staff in his hand and a pack on his back, he wanted to wander and commune alone with the mysterious forces that roll our planet through space and make the setting sun strike fire from snow-peaks when valleys are already sunk in the chill of night.

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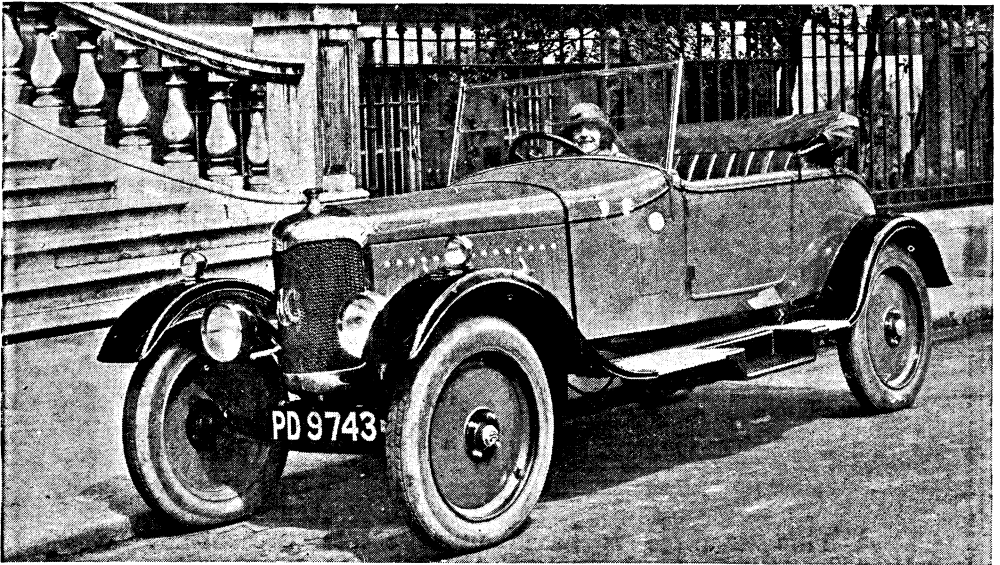
"But how," I asked, "would you propose to get here, so as to do your wanderings and communings? It is more than fifty miles to Grenoble; or, if you were to take a very circuitous railway journey to Briançon, you would still have twenty miles of road to cover. If you were to come up in a charabanc you would be subscribing to the motoring movement in a form that is, doubtless, most obnoxious to you."

"Can't you see that the only way to let the glory of this place sink into your being is to go on foot?"

"Well, we are giving ourselves one precious day out of our hard-earned motoring holiday, so that we can walk in these gorgeous mountains. Give the little car its due. Is it likely without it we should have had even one such

the car, you, a busy man leading a most useful life, would have lived and died without seeing or even imagining this place and all the rest we have passed and are going to pass."

A few days later we bathed in the Mediterranean, where pines and red rocks came down to a sea that was wine-dark, yet full of peacock colours, and the sun was so fierce as to compel one to protect one's head. We sat drying in that torrid sun, whilst a light breeze from the sea prevented the rocks and the beach from becoming suffocating. Our spirits bathed in the languor of the South. Two days previously we had wakened in the high mountains to see frost on the ground. Now all our coats were out of use, stuffed pell-mell into the back of the car. On a journey like ours it is the amazing contrasts that provide much of the fascination.



AN A.C. SIX-CYLINDER 16/40 "ROYAL."

day? We should never have dreamed of coming so far. We should have missed all that we have seen on the way—Chartres Cathedral, the Loire, the Col du Chat, the Lac du Bourget, the Grande Chartreuse with a view of Mont Blanc, and the Romanche valley on the way up here."

After dinner on our first evening at the Col du Lautaret the high-minded companion, in mellow mood, modified his attitude so far as to give me my due for having persuaded him to come, for having brought him right across France to the grandest scenes he had yet set eyes on and the purest, keenest air he had ever breathed.

"But," I put in, "you really owe nothing to me and everything to the car and the years of patient human effort and ingenuity that evolved it. I wanted to come here more than you did, because I knew what it was like; and I wanted your good company. If I had not had

I pointed this out, and my companion said, "Yes," closed his eyes and repeated, "Yes," showing signs of falling asleep.

That night at dinner he said that he had mental indigestion and could not remember where we spent the night after leaving the Col du Lautaret, what other Cols we had passed over, and which came before which. He had ceased to worry about the cost of the trip—which was coming out at about 25s. a head a day, including car expenses and everything—such is the influence of the South; so we had a bottle of good Burgundy, to help the mental indigestion! Under its influence he spoke words that were grateful and comforting. I kept on pointing out that it was to the car he should be grateful; but he was converted anyway now. Some of the things he said are worth recalling. Being high-minded and a philosopher into the bargain, he was able to put the case for modern

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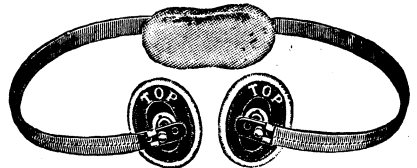
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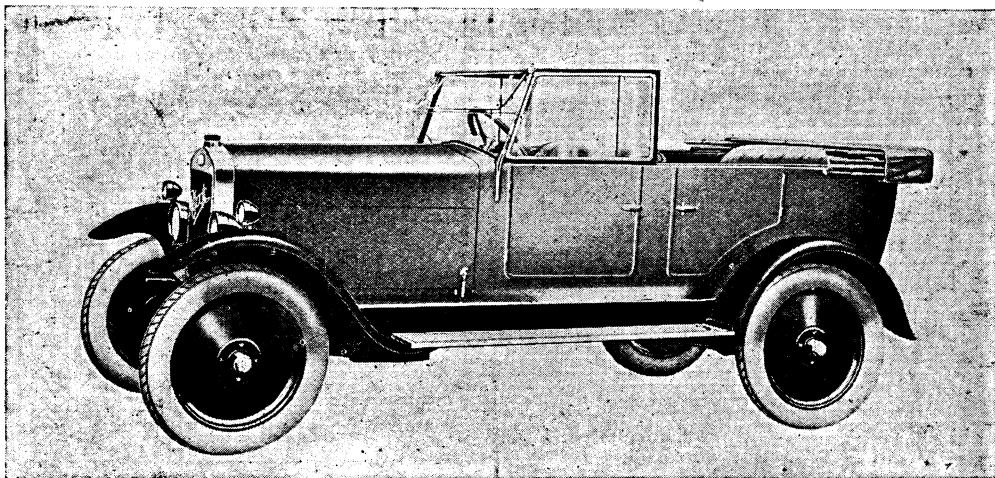
“One has to live,” he declared, “as the world lives. One gets more out of life by conforming than by kicking and finding fault with its ways. You have shown me——”

“The car has shown you.”

“I have been shown that in ten days—we’ve only been ten days on this journey so far, haven’t we?—one can see and experience more than I could ever have believed. Formerly I should have ridiculed the idea that such days were

self: that is what you are really after. I want everyone to do it: I see what a difference for the better this motoring is making and will make in the world.”

“That’s it: you’ve got it! I never could quite express it, but you’ve hit the nail on the head. I want to be able to afford a Big Six Bentley, a Straight-Eight Panhard and the rest, so as to make myself a better man. Then I shall be able to start in and improve the old world. If you’ll fill my glass I think I’ll begin at once!”



A FOUR-CYLINDER 11 H.P. RHODE 4/5 SEATER.

possible; and so would anyone else who did not know, who had not actually experienced what motoring means. Now I want everyone to be able to do it; and I see that your ambition to possess a better car, so that you can do this sort of thing to the nth degree, is not really ignoble; because, after all, one cannot do much in the world without first finding and realising oneself—making the most and the best of one-

I knew now that the discussion was over, that in the Cevennes as we continued our journey, down the Gorges du Tarn, across the Causses and along the Pyrenees, there would be one chief topic of conversation. Should my high-minded friend begin his motoring career with an Austin Seven? Would a Morris-Cowley be more suitable to a comparatively impecunious family man, a Clyno, a Jowett, or any other make?

The foregoing article forms the second of a short series designed to be of service to “Windsor” readers who find that there are many points still to be ascertained and some difficulties to be overcome before they can become enthusiastic motorists. Advice will gladly be given to correspondents who may like to send any letter of enquiry to The Editor, “The Windsor Magazine,” Warwick House, Salisbury Square, London, E.C.4. The next article will appear in the ensuing number.





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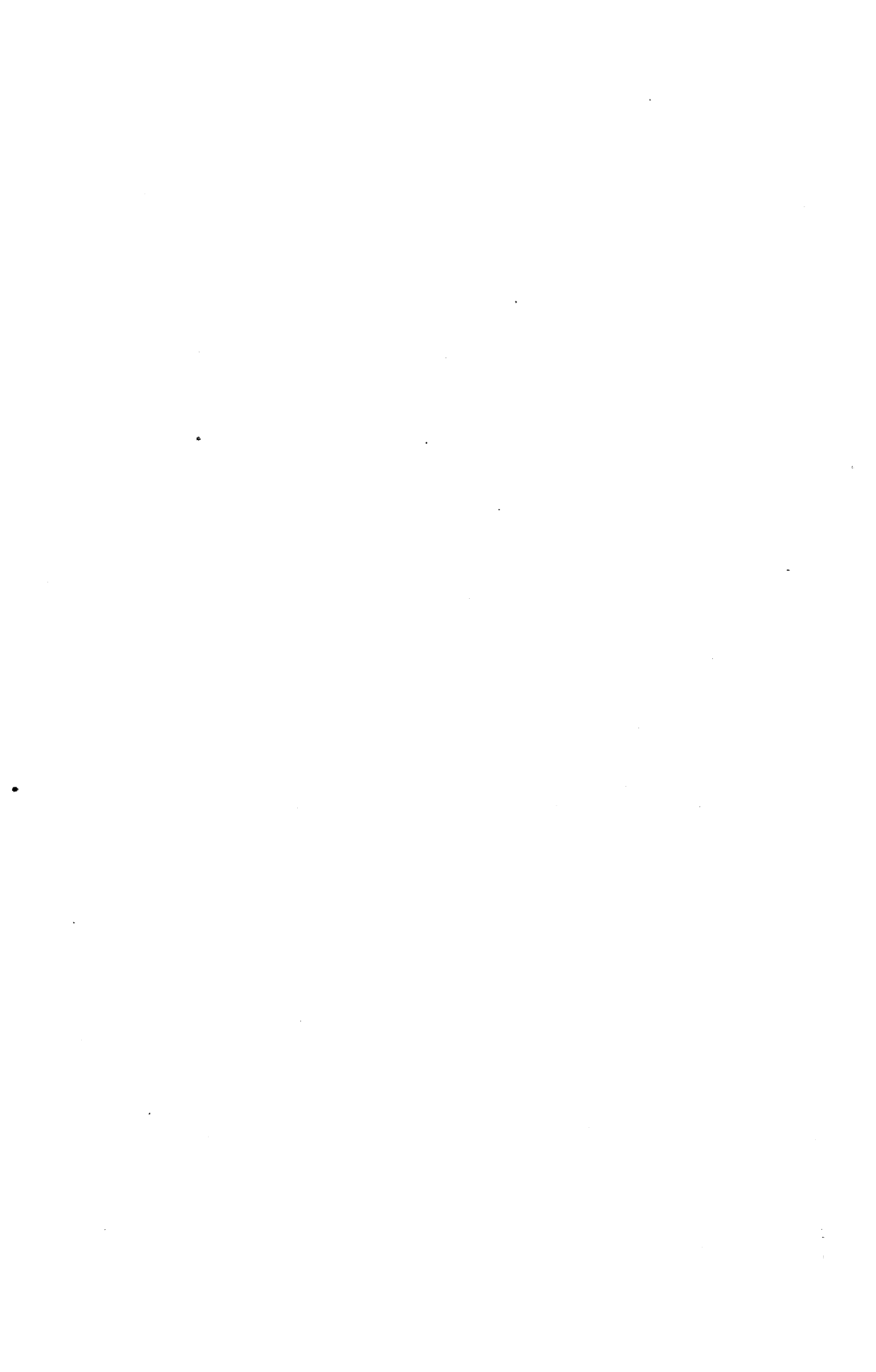
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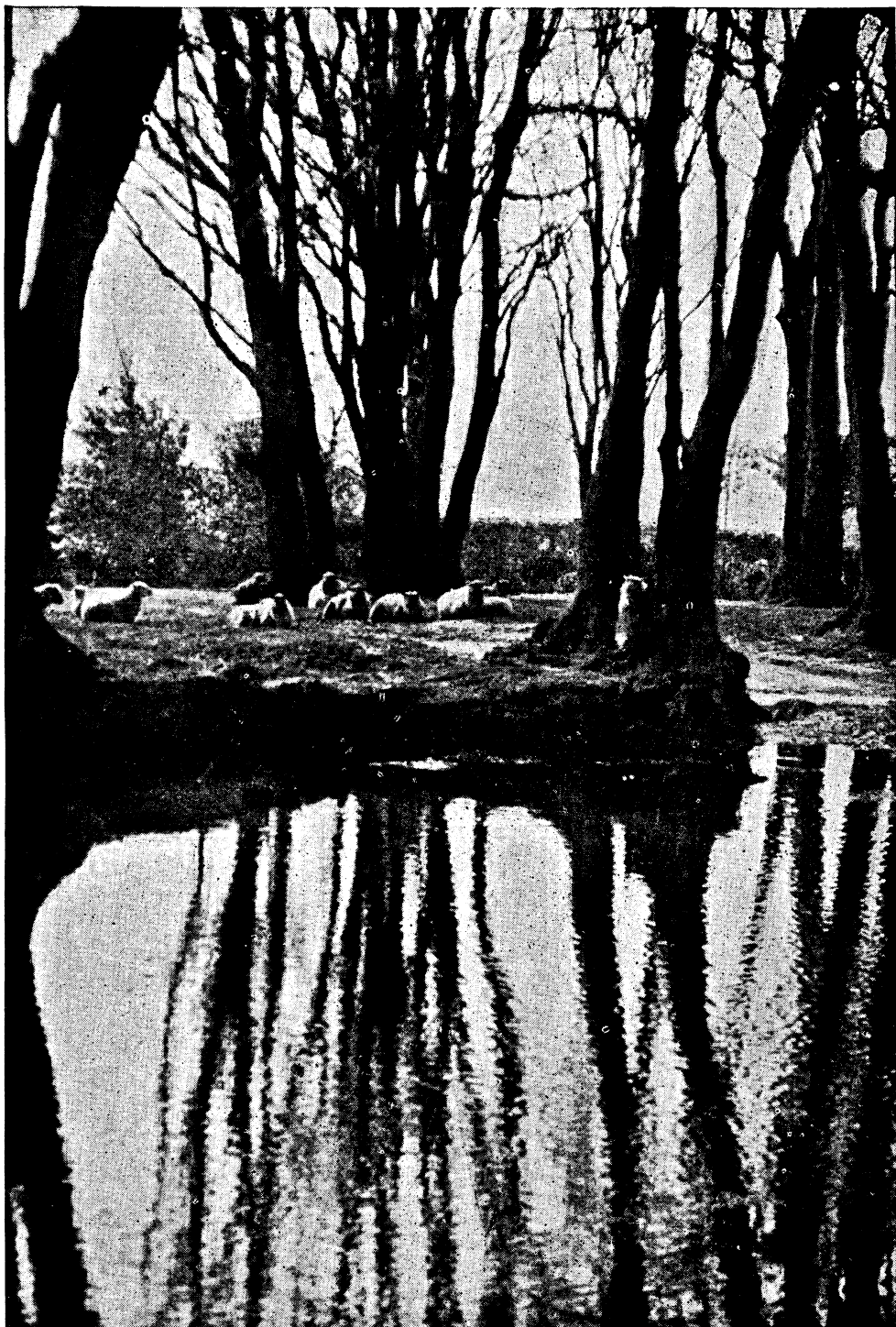
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THE MIRROR.
A PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDY BY ALLAN PHILLIP.

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ON BEING SOMEBODY ELSE THE ART OF MAKING UP

By CEDRIC HARDWICKE

THE YOUNG IMPERSONATOR OF OLD MEN IN "THE FARMER'S
WIFE" AND "YELLOW SANDS"

THE art of turning yourself into somebody quite different and of maintaining the illusion successfully enough to impress your supposed personality on a critical audience throughout a performance is not altogether an easy one to acquire.

In the first place, playgoers are particularly sophisticated these days. You see, in recent years, the passion for realism has been carried to the *n*th degree, so that if, say, the part of a Chinaman has to be portrayed, it is more than likely that a real Chinaman will be introduced into the rôle. In the same way, the theatrical public knows full well that there are plenty of capable "old" actors available for grey-haired parts, and so it rightly expects you to "be" an old man, if that is your character, and not merely to look like one.

In the halcyon days of the stock

companies, of course, things were different. Then, it was no unusual thing for an actor to represent as many as ten or twelve different types in the course of a single week. His local audience knew this and gave him full credit—when credit

was due—for his skill in altering his appearance as the different necessities arose.

It is essential, then, for the character actor of to-day to make a careful study of his make-up from several points of view. Not only must his facial expression be that of his prototype, but his walk, his mannerisms, and his speech must all carry conviction.

My personal experience has taught me that the most common mistake made by beginners and amateurs is that of overdoing things. Now, too heavy a facial make-up merely has the effect of producing a mask-like appearance that allows for no mobility of ex-



Photo by]

[Lenare.

CEDRIC HARDWICKE AS WILLIAM BLEE IN EDEN PHILL-
POTTS' COMEDY, "DEVONSHIRE CREAM."

pression. Try for yourself, and see. If the face is smeared with thick grease-paint, very strongly lined and pencilled to excess, it is practically impossible to make any successful play with the features. Personally, when I am trying out a new

Then, again, minute detail will not be seen across the footlights. Broad effects are required more than very close work with the lining pencil or brush. The photograph of myself as Churdles Ash in "The Farmer's Wife" will illustrate my

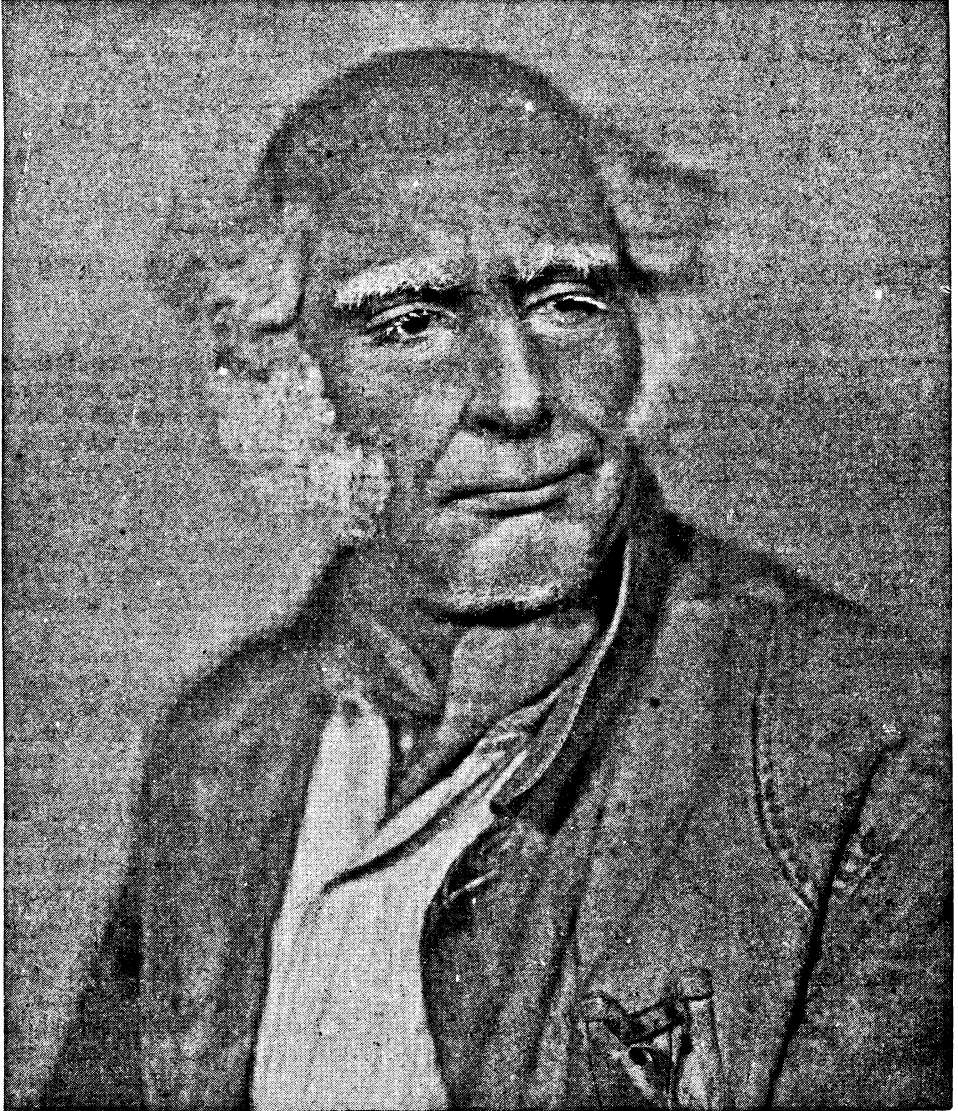


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CEDRIC HARDWICKE AS CHURDLES ASH IN EDEN PHILLPOTTS' PLAY, "THE FARMER'S WIFE,"

[Sasha.

make-up, I grimace at myself in front of a looking-glass in a way that must appear perfectly imbecile to any uninitiated looker-on. There is a method in my madness, however, for my reflection tells me whether I am able to "put over" the pantomime I wish to present to my audience.

meaning here. Notice how the merciless camera has revealed the falsity of the white of my eyebrows and eyelashes, yet my friends tell me that from the front the illusion was successful.

In connection with this I may mention that while I was appearing at the Court



CEDRIC HARDWICKE AS HIMSELF.

Photograph by Pollard Crowther.

Theatre, I decided to have some photographs taken of myself as Churdles Ash. Being pressed for time, I left the theatre ready dressed. As luck would have it, there was a heavy traffic jam at the corner of Bond Street, so I jumped out of my taxi and walked the remainder of the distance. Now it is



Photo by]

[The Stage Photo Co.

CEDRIC HARDWICKE AS JULIUS CÆSAR IN GEORGE BERNARD SHAW'S PLAY, "CÆSAR AND CLEOPATRA."

rather a remarkable fact that not a soul out of the crowds of people I passed took the slightest notice of me in my rough garb of the old countryman. Of course, I remembered to act the part, and lose the springy step of a younger man, otherwise I should have immediately attracted attention even in phlegmatic London.

As a matter of fact, the actor's legs and

body will, when properly manipulated, prove more serviceable to him in creating an illusion of age than will any amount of intensive making-up. The somewhat dragging walk, combined with the stoop—not to be exaggerated, by the way—that comes with advancing years, are more noticeable than the lines and wrinkles that may furrow a once smooth brow, both in real life and on the stage.

When altering the appearance of your face, it is much safer to intensify your own natural lines than it is to attempt painting a new expression. Before trying experiments, it is advisable to smear the face and neck with cold cream in order to prevent the paint working stickily.

Having completed your preparations, rub in a suitable groundwork of flesh-tint. Then, with a mixture of lake and blue, paint shadows into all parts of the features that naturally sink with age. Touch up the edges of these shadows with a lighter colour to obtain the high lights and smooth away all rough and sharp contrasts.

Be careful that your ears and neck are coloured to match the rest of your complexion. If your face appears too broad, some rouge placed well back on the cheek-bones will make it look narrower.

If you wish to give yourself wrinkles, lift your brows so that you can follow the natural lines. Then mark in with lake and blue, as before, finally adding the high lights. The main idea in assuming age is to break up the smooth surface of a young face.

There are other "tricks of the trade" also. Thus, whitened eyebrows are rubbed up the wrong way to produce the bristly effect of age—simple, but effective, eh? Then, if you wish to become toothless without visiting your dentist, you black out the front teeth that should be missing.

Another thing that the actor has to watch is the lighting of the theatre in which he happens to be appearing. If the lights are particularly strong, he will not need nearly such a heavy make-up as he would when acting on a dimly illuminated stage.

When you have completed your paint-work to your satisfaction, tone down all crudities by powdering liberally before removing any obvious traces of your handiwork with the hare's foot.

Now you are, or should be, the character you are about to depict, and it is up to you actually to feel and be like that person as far as you can for the next three hours or so.

Incidentally, it is curious how people

identify the actor with the parts he plays. Thus, when I first became engaged to my wife, one of her friends exclaimed, on hearing the news, "Oh, not that horrible old man, surely?"

On another occasion, I was engaged to appear at the Coliseum for a term of four weeks. During that period, I suppose I met the stage manager in the hall at least twice every twenty-four hours, and mostly passed the time of day with him. Yet he had to ask who I was towards the end of my engagement.

Then, too, when I was playing in the Birmingham Repertoire Company, under Sir Barry Jackson, I generally used to stop for a moment to speak to an old lady who was engaged as theatre cleaner. At that time, I had rendered a long succession of rather disreputable "character" parts, but, finally, I was cast for a modern "juvenile-lead rôle."

"Now," I thought, "I can really let myself go in the matter of clothes. It will be a relief after having to wear any old odds and ends for so long."

And let myself go, I did. The smartest and tightest morning coat my tailor could produce adorned me. The crease down my immaculate trousers was something at which to marvel. My silk hat and patent shoes would have served as mirrors if necessary. White spats, button-hole, gold-mounted cane, monocle and all the other appurtenances that go to make a modern Beau Brummell were mine. I fancied myself somewhat in that part, I can tell you.

But, alas, pride has its fall. On the second or third day of my new-found glory, I met my old cleaner friend. She was on her hands and knees, hard at work. As I appeared,

she sat back and slowly surveyed me from head to foot. Then a smile broke over her gnarled features.

"Law, now," she said, "they do put you into some funny sort of rig-outs, don't they?"

Once an audience has accepted you as



Photo by]

[Pollard Crouther.

CEDRIC HARDWICKE AS DICK IN "YELLOW SANDS," THE COMEDY BY EDEN AND ADELAIDE PHILLPOTTS, NOW RUNNING AT THE HAYMARKET THEATRE.

the character you represent, it takes a deal of convincing that you may be quite a different person out of business hours.

Only recently, for instance, I was the subject of a bet between a well-known doctor and a friend of his. The medical man was insistent that my age was over

60 years and cheerfully wagered a perfectly good "fiver" on his opinion, saying, in all seriousness, that he based his idea on the veins of my arms, which were obviously those of an old man.

On another occasion, I was touring as Billy Blee, in "Devonshire Cream." At Hastings, the Mayor and Corporation invited some members of the company to lunch in the Mayor's parlour. We all assembled, and were waiting to commence, when I was asked by our host, "When is the old man coming round?" the old man, of course, meaning myself.

Yes, it is indeed hard to be ever suspected of possessing all the faults and vices of your stage personality, but that is the lot of the character actor. It may be all very well for the Thespian who enacts heroic rôles, although I suspect that the expectations of his friends must need some living up to in everyday life. Anyway, I am quite sure that since I have been appearing as that cheerful, if bibulous soul, Dick Varwell, many people shake their heads sadly when my name is mentioned and murmur, "Ah, yes, not a bad fellow, really, but I fear he is going downhill."



A WET DAY IN BLOOMSBURY.

THERE must be gardens where the roses bloom,
 And proudly poise in sunlit splendour free,
 Or in the shady crevice of a wall
 Nod friendly-wise toward the glistening sea.

There must be deserts where the burning sand
 Is broken by a palm-leaf-sheltered spring ;
 A quiet oasis in a barren land
 Where fast migrating birds may pause to sing.

There must be orange groves where fragrant scent
 Wafts softly in where white-walled houses sleep,
 And graceful willows bend their trailing boughs
 To drink of quenching waters cool and deep.

There must be beauty in the width of world,
 Be beauty near or beauty far away ;
 There must be beauty for those eyes that seek
 And penetrate beyond the nearer grey.

GILBERT DAVIS.

“WHAT SHALL THY WAGES BE?”

◉ By RALPH DURAND ◉

◉ ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE ◉

FOR the first time in her life Winifred Neville knew what sweltering heat can be. Beads of perspiration formed on her forehead and trickled, some down the bridge of her nose, some into her eyes and out again round the curve of her nostril to the corner of her mouth; some down cheek and jaw; but they all met again at the point of her chin and dropped on to her white drill jacket, which for the last hour had been as wet as if someone had thrown a bucket of water at her. There was no movement in the lifeless air. Through the wide doorway of the little mission church she could see, silhouetted against the cruel steel-grey glare of the sky, fronds of a borassus palm as lifeless as the tracery of a cathedral window. It needed a conscious effort even to breathe.

The missionary and his wife had seemed to take it for granted that she would attend the morning service, and as they were her hosts, she had not liked to excuse herself—it would have seemed like setting a bad example to the mission natives. But as Mr. Rock was preaching in the Wanazoa language, of which Winifred understood not one word in a hundred, she felt that she was justified in letting her attention wander.

She was interested in the hat that Mrs. Rock was wearing, and tried to remember how many years ago it was that hats of that particular shape had been worn. She was still more interested in the way she did her hair. She had a dim recollection that a governess who had passed out of her life when she was five years old had worn her hair in just that way. From the clues afforded by her hair and her hat, Winifred deduced that Mrs. Rock, a dried-up, silent little woman, had ceased to be influenced by contemporary fashions rather more than twenty years ago, and had not been inside a decent shop during the last ten years.

Winifred had been brought up in an atmosphere of culture. Before she was twenty scholars of twice her age had talked to her as to an intellectual equal. She was not one, therefore, to sneer at Mrs. Rock just because she had lost interest in fashion plates, but she could not help thinking that a woman who could contentedly sever herself for so long from all possibility of contact with civilisation must have a somewhat torpid mentality.

When Mrs. Rock's hat had ceased to interest, Winifred looked around her. It was not because the Rocks were Wesleyans that the scene was utterly different from everything that she had associated with Divine worship ever since she had been old enough to attend the services in Ilchester Cathedral. The architecture of the mission church was barn-like in its simplicity. The roof was of thatch; the walls were of mud-plastered wattle; the floor was of stamped earth; and the only pieces of church furniture were the two chairs on which she and Mrs. Rock sat. The native members of the congregation squatted on the ground.

It was principally the demeanour of the congregation that made it difficult for Winifred to feel that she was in a place of worship. Children played “touch last” in and out of the church quite unrebuked, and the behaviour of most of the elders was not very much more reverent. They were listening to Mr. Rock's sermon with interest, but quite without reverence. Occasionally someone would ejaculate “*Wonama!*” a word which Winifred happened to know meant “Liar!” but did not know was meant to convey polite interest, as would the phrase “You don't say so,” or was used as an expression of wonder, such as “Impossible!”

Sometimes when something in the sermon

attracted special attention a buzz of talk would arise. At such times Mr. Rock would mop his forehead and wait till the talk died down before continuing. He knew his thick-headed congregation. He knew that if he allowed them to discuss points of interest as they arose they would carry away a clearer idea of what he was trying to teach than they would if they waited in silence till the service was over. Winifred did not realise this, and she was inclined to think that Mr. Rock tolerated bad behaviour in church because he was losing interest in his work.

Apart from their bad behaviour, the most notable characteristic of the native members of the congregation was their offensive smell. Winifred knew that they were not to blame for this. It did not arise from dirt. They had all washed their clothes and bathed that morning. Most of them, indeed, had been splashing in the lake when summoned to church by the blare of a trumpet of sable-antelope's horn. Nevertheless, they did smell most offensive to European nostrils. She considered that their smell deserved a prominent place among cockroaches, dust, flies, glare, heat, insipid food, leeches, mosquitoes, squalor, thirst, ticks, and all the other evils that, taken cumulatively, form so great a part of the White Man's Burden in Africa.

Winifred felt no shame in acknowledging that she was not of the stuff of which pioneers are made. She would have shown ridiculously false modesty if she had pretended not to know that she possessed intellectual powers such as are given to few in any one generation. Her thesis, *On Homer's Use of the Hexameter*, published before she was twenty-three years old, had been acclaimed by savants of world-wide reputation as a notable contribution to Greek scholarship. It would have been sheer waste of a valuable life if she had given up the work for which she was peculiarly fitted to marry an obscure magistrate who governed an uncouth tribe of savages in a remote part of Central Africa. Yet she had been on the point of doing it. Six years before, she had promised to marry a youngster whose intellect was so far inferior to hers that, having no prospect of being able to earn enough at home, he had had to go abroad to seek his fortune. Six months before, he had cabled asking her to come out to him. She had come. But when she had realised the kind of life she would have to live, the loneliness and dis-

comfort she would have to endure, she had also realised that the sacrifice was too great to make. She had stayed only a few hours at Peter Darrell's *boma*, and then Mr. Rock had brought her away to stay at the mission station until the return of the lake steamer that would take her on the first stage of her journey back to a civilised country, a decent climate, cultured surroundings, the society of her intellectual equals, and a house that had a bathroom indoors with hot and cold water laid on.

Winifred's self-congratulation on having had the strength of mind at the last moment to break off her engagement was, at this point of her reflections, emphasised by a most painful stab in the arm, inflicted by a large iridescent fly. She already knew something about the bites of Central African flies. On the strength of having, as a preparation for life in Central Africa, taken some lessons in Red Cross work—with a nice, clean, perfectly English boy on whom to practise the tying of bandages—and because she had wished to show the Rocks that she was grateful for their hospitality, Winifred had offered to help the missionary with his dispensary work. The offer had been accepted, and she had been called upon to hold a struggling girl while Mr. Rock extracted from a loathsome ulcer a worm hatched from an egg that a fly had deposited in her flesh. Winifred had not the nerve for Red Cross work of that kind, and she had promptly resigned the office of dispenser's assistant. Now, after involuntarily gasping at the unexpected pain, she turned sick with fear lest, if the bite were not attended to as soon as the service was over, she might be the subject of an equally revolting operation. To give point to her exasperation, someone seeing her wince, or hearing her cry out, had guffawed like a clown! Winifred felt that she cordially hated the African savage.

But soon others began to laugh. The congregation was made up of converts, who had been with the Rocks for years and had come into the Wanazoa country to help them establish their mission, and "Enquirers," local natives who attended the church by invitation to hear the "Good Tidings" that Rock had to tell them. It was these latter who laughed. Winifred wondered what they found to laugh at. She remembered that just before the fly had stung her she had recognised in the sermon the names "Annas" and "Caia-phas." Now she recognised the word

"Pilate." She realised that Mr. Rock was relating the sublimest, most movingly pathetic story in the world's history: and these brutes were laughing at it! They were listening with strained attention, but each grinning face was aflame with the lust of cruelty. They were relishing the pitiful story—floating over it!

Whenever, at home in Ilchester, someone from the foreign mission field had occupied the cathedral pulpit, Winifred had sung *From Greenland's Icy Mountains* with fervour and had contributed to the offertory more readily than when it was for some such uninspiring object as Diocesan expenses. She had known that the heathen sometimes proved difficult to teach; but she had never conceived the possibility of their jeering at what she held so sacred. She found herself asking a question about mission work that on the lips of others had always aroused her indignation: "Was it worth while?"

"I am afraid you must have been shocked at the behaviour of the pagan members of the congregation," said Rock, as he attended to Winifred's fly-bite after the service. "You must make allowances for them. My knowledge of the Wanazoa language is still very imperfect, and no doubt my grammatical blunders must seem to them very amusing."

"But were you not telling the story of the Crucifixion?"

"I got no further than the account of the Scourging. I had not the heart to go on. You are right. It was not my grammatical blunders that amused them. They were laughing because cruelty is engrained in their natures. Cruelty and lust—their minds are saturated with both. I do not suppose that the people of the Cities of the Plain were more evil in their thoughts and their lives than the savages of Africa. It appals me. The more I know them the more heartsick I fear I get. You have heard me joke about my work. If I didn't force myself to see a humorous side to it, I should be crushed by the knowledge of how little at best I can do, by the feeling of constantly repeated failure. I should give up. Looking for good in the mind of the pagan African is like looking for a gold coin in a refuse-bin. Yet one knows that the gold is there. I have found it there myself more than once; and the joy of finding it gives one new heart for the work. If only I could spare the time to study the language more closely, I should

come nearer to finding the gold. Do you know, Miss Neville, it occurred to me this morning that your visit to us may prove to be the beginning of better things in my work among these people."

"I should be more glad than I could say if I could do anything in return for your kindness," said Winifred. And she meant it. She had felt uneasiness as to her position at the mission station. Nothing had been said as to whether she was to consider herself an honoured guest or a boarder. The smallest sum they were likely to ask her to pay would have seemed an exorbitant price for a lodging in an earth-floored hut, furnished with a rickety camp-bed, packing-cases to serve as washstand and dressing-table, and a few nails driven into the centre-pole for her to hang her clothes upon. She knew, too, that her food did not cost them much. She had watched Mrs. Rock bargain with women who brought food for sale, and she knew that a yard of the cheapest kind of trade cloth would buy a couple of fowls, and that copper-wire, the principal currency of the country, was worth twenty or thirty times its weight in pounded grain or roughly husked rice. And though it was true that the freight charged on European goods to the Wanazoa end of Lake Madzikulu made the simplest kind of groceries expensive, even this did not add much to the Rocks' household budget, for, instead of groaning at the price of cheese and tapioca, they went without these luxuries and rejoiced at escaping the net of the profiteer. For Winifred to offer to pay the Rocks the small sum that she was costing them would seem ridiculous; to offer to pay more might seem insulting; and no cash value could possibly be put on the kindness they were lavishing on her.

"What can I do to help you?" she asked eagerly.

"I will tell you," said Rock. "When you reach home again, before returning to your studies of Homer, which can't be so important as men's souls, find a labourer to help me work in the vineyard. I don't want one who will come out full of zeal and on closer acquaintance with the work abandon it as not worth doing. To avert that danger, I want you to draw a true picture of the life we live, of our constant discouragement, of the terribly Sisyphus-like nature of our work. Whoever comes must have grit, and must be prepared to stay with us long enough to learn the language and translate at least one of the Gospels

into it—a work that I shall never have the time to do, and perhaps have not the ability to do. He must be a scholar, because the Wanazoa language is so full of subtleties that the translation should be made from the original Greek. Another qualification—because I could not afford to pay for his help—is that he must have private means.”

“But would not your mission pay him?”

Rock shook his head sadly.

“No mission pays me now. That is why I abandoned my work among the Baseni and came here instead. Supporters of missions very reasonably demand definite results that I cannot supply. I will not baptise an adult unless I am convinced that he understands and accepts a Christian’s responsibilities. In ten years I have baptised three adults. Can I ask people at home, who cannot realise my difficulties, to support such a slacker as I must seem to them?”

“Three converts in ten years!” The question was uttered before Winifred realised that her brain had again formed it. “Is it worth while?”

“I lay foundations, out of sight even to myself, on which it may be that someone coming after me may build.”

“But these people are so . . .”

“So little better than brute-beasts?”

Rock flung out his arms with a superb gesture of unstudied oratory. “What does my Maker see when He looks at me? Does He turn from me in disgust? Has it never occurred to you that but for the Grace of God you and I might be black, blubber-lipped savages?” His manner changed and his eyes twinkled. “Come along to lunch. I’ll bet you what you like it’s either tinned tongue or sardines. My wife always honours the Sabbath by providing a luxury of some kind.”

Winifred took little part in the conversation at the midday meal. She thought of the sacrifice she had refused to make for the man she had promised to marry, and of the sacrifice the Rocks had made for such as the Wanazoa.

Twelve men of the King’s Rifles marched into the mission station, halted in the shade of a tree, grounded arms and stood at ease. The sergeant in charge of the squad approached and handed Rock a letter. He glanced at it, then read it carefully, more than once; then sat silent for awhile, his fingers toying with his beard, staring out across the water of the lake.

“My stockade was built only to keep out lions, Sergeant,” he said. “Your men had better cut timber to strengthen it.”

The sergeant saluted again and returned to his squad. They piled arms and dispersed.

“It isn’t only missionaries that see their work crumble to nothing,” said Rock. “For five years poor Darrell has laboured to turn the Wanazoa from the most truculent gang of bloodthirsty savages in Africa into peaceable, law-abiding citizens of the British Empire, and now! Listen to this letter:

“‘DEAR ROCK,—

“‘I have had a warning from my *bandazi*, Chiteema, that a party of young warriors are determined to get my skull for *ufiti* purposes. Chiteema was never much of a hand at giving a lucid explanation, but it appears that it was known that I intended to marry, and, as the lady whom I was going to marry has left me, they think that I shall shortly follow her to “build my house in her father’s kraal.” They don’t want me to go, or rather they don’t want to lose the prosperity that they think I have brought to the country, and they think that if they take my head and stick it on a pole, as a national possession, they will have the benefit of my superior wisdom for keeps.

“‘It is quite possible that the matter won’t come to anything, but if any considerable number of spearmen come to my *boma* head-hunting—and they aren’t likely to run the risk of defeat by attacking in too small numbers—my small force of Riflemen would be too small to do any good. To use them for my own defence would be a useless sacrifice of life. I am, therefore, sending them to protect your mission station, because, although my head is the main objective, the danger is that once the men who want it have got it they’ll go on killing so long as any white, or anyone who isn’t of their own tribe, is left in the country. The sergeant has instructions to put himself and his men entirely under your orders.

“‘In case you don’t hear from me again—good luck to you.

“‘Yours sincerely,

“‘PETER DARRELL.’”

For one impulsive moment Winifred felt inclined to go to the man whose life she had not had the pluck to share, and show that she had at least courage enough to die with him. But her common sense told her that in such an emergency her duty was to

efface herself, obey orders and give as little trouble as possible.

Mrs. Rock heard the news with no more perturbation than a woman may reasonably show whose daily routine is upset.

"What about the Baseni, Walter?" she asked. "Is the canoe big enough to hold them all?"

Rock pondered.

"Just big enough, perhaps," he said. "But not if they take their wives. I'll

come with you from your last mission station, aren't they?" she asked. "Surely if they are Christians they won't abandon their wives!"

"Their wives' lives aren't in danger," explained Mrs. Rock. "If the Wanazoa were to capture the mission station the men would certainly all be killed, but they wouldn't kill the women, because if they did not want wives for themselves they would sell them to men who did."



"Duncan took the bottle from his pocket and poured the whisky on to the shingle. 'If I'm ta tak' command,' he said, 'I'm better wanting that.'"

go and talk to them and let them decide for themselves what to do."

He went on his errand and Mrs. Rock began methodically to pile plates and put food left over from the meal out of reach of ants in a gauze safe that hung on wires from a rafter. Winifred was amazed at her calmness. She and her husband were behaving as if their own lives were a matter of no importance whatever. She was even more amazed at Mr. Rock's suggestion that his mission boys should escape and leave their wives to be killed.

"The Baseni are Christian natives who

"But wouldn't the women rather die than——"

"Oh, no. Native women are accustomed to be treated like cattle. One of our women has had three husbands; the second killed the first, and the third killed the second and became a Christian afterwards. They don't like being married to pagans after having had Christian husbands, but they would rather do that than be killed."

When Rock returned he was no longer as calm as he had been. He walked with an air of pride and began to talk as soon as he was within earshot.

"This is the sort of occasion when one feels fully paid for one's work," he said triumphantly. "I told you, Miss Neville, that there is gold in an African if only one can find it. The Baseni boys, one and all, flatly refuse to leave us. Now, if only there was a white man to command our little force! They would fight so much better under white leadership."

"Why didn't Mr. Darrell come with his Riflemen to take command?"

"That would be the surest way of involving us in danger. He is the main object of attack."

"And why don't you yourself lead them?"

"I wish I could. The old Adam in me doesn't at all relish the prospect of dying tamely. But I have always held that a Minister of the Gospel cannot consistently take life even in self-defence. One has to stand by one's principles."

Mrs. Rock stared across the lake, shading her eyes with her hand.

"There's someone coming in a canoe," she said, "and I believe it's a white man."

"God send it is!" said Rock fervently. "It must be Duncan from Brazenbridge's Stores, as he's the only other white man within a hundred miles. I should not class him as a fighting man, but any man with a white skin is worth half a dozen blacks to us."

A canoe was approaching in a series of erratic curves, propelled by a man in European clothes who was handling his paddle somewhat as a drum-major handles his staff. He dug it once or twice in the water on his right, then swung it over his head and smote the water on his left. And he constantly moved his position, paddling sometimes from the stern, sometimes from the bow and sometimes from amidships. The canoe responded erratically to his efforts. It would head straight for the shore for a score of yards and then, for no apparent reason, turn towards deep water. At last the man gave up the attempt to beach the canoe in a seaman-like fashion. He put down the paddle, jumped overboard and waded ashore, dragging the canoe behind him.

"Four mortal hours it's taken me to get here," he shouted indignantly. "My boys all deserted me and left me, me that has never handled a paddle in my life before, to navigate that cross-eyed drunken old tub all by myself."

He reeled slightly as he spoke, and it was

obvious that he himself was not entirely sober. He carried a rifle over one shoulder and a coat over the other, and from the pocket of the coat protruded the neck of a whisky-bottle.

"And isn't it just my luck, for trouble to break out just when I was beginning to celebrate the Battle of Bannockburn?"

He whistled a few bars of "Wi' a hundred pipers an' a', an' a'," and without waiting for the formality of an introduction addressed himself to Winifred.

"We Scotties, ye ken, are great lads for celebrating anniversaries. I celebrate once every month, because once a month a terrible thirst comes on me. If it doesn't happen to be the New Year or Bobbie Burns' nicht, or ma birthday, I just find some ither anniversary to celebrate. I'd go mad in this great lonely land wanting the wheesky."

Winifred looked at the man with disgust. She had always had a refined woman's proper horror of drunkenness, and she felt it intolerable that this sot should come at such a crisis to add to the Rocks' anxieties.

"Well, now, Rock, I'll tell you what for I'm here," continued Duncan. "There's no a great deal o' room in that unhandy craft o' mine wi' a' the proveesions I put into her, an' she leaks if she's loaded too much, but there'll be just room for you an' your guid lady an' the lass here. You take an' navigate her along the coast till ye're out o' reach o' they murderous Wana-zoa and then juist camp on a bit beach till the *Lady o' the Lake* happens along to take ye off. So long as ye keep beyond spear-throwing range o' the land ye'll be a' richt, for the Wanazoa hae no canoes, an' if they had they ken no mair about navigation than I ken about flying. Dinna mind about me. I've got ma rifle. I'll be doing fine."

"If I were going to run away I'd be gone by now," said Rock. "I have a canoe and Baseni boys to man it, but there's not room in it for all of us, so we are all going to stick together. But if you'll take Miss Neville out of danger it will be a weight off our minds."

"An' your guid leddy too, of course."

Mrs. Rock laughed. Usually her manner as she went about her duties was that of one who, though wearied with the burden and heat of the day, is determined to endure to the end. But now she actually laughed.

"Mr. Rock and I have lived and worked together for twenty-five years; we aren't

going to part now," she said, then turned to Winifred. "Run and put together a few of the things you value most, my dear, and don't forget to take a rain-coat. The dews are heavy at night and there'll be no tent to cover you."

Winifred hurried away to the hut that had been assigned to her and began feverishly to turn over her belongings, trying to decide, not what she valued most, but what she needed most on a water-journey of uncertain duration in an open canoe. Till the storekeeper had come she had put a fierce constraint on herself to speak calmly, to behave naturally, to shut her mind to the fear of danger. But now that an avenue of escape had opened, she realised how she clung to life. The danger of a voyage in an unseaworthy canoe with a drunken man who admitted that he did not know how to manage it seemed trivial in comparison with the peril she was flying from. Suddenly as she tumbled warm clothes into a kit-bag a thought struck her, a thought that for one contemptible moment she tried to ignore but that would not be ignored. She left the kit-bag lying on her bed and went back to where the storekeeper was waiting for her.

"Mr. Duncan," she said, "when Mr. Rock saw you coming he thanked God because he thought you would take command of the native soldiers. If you had not me to consider, would you go away or would you stay here and fight?"

"I'd stand by ma own colour."

"Then so will I. You are needed here. I will not take you away."

"I'm telling ye, lass," the storekeeper said gravely, "ye may not live to see the morn's licht."

"I'm a poor-spirited creature," said Winifred, "but I'm not going to be the only one to run away. I haven't got the pluck to live in this country, but I'm not such a worm that I can't die in it."

Duncan took the bottle from his pocket and poured the whisky on to the shingle.

"If I'm ta tak' command," he said, "I'm better wanting that."

It was a small act of self-sacrifice compared with the far greater one he had made or with the one that Winifred had nerved herself to make, but it impressed her. She found that she saw the man now, not as a drunkard to be despised, but as a comrade worthy of respect. She felt that he was a man she could like.

"Tell me, Mr. Duncan," she said, as they

walked together up the beach towards the mission huts, "you are neither a missionary nor an official—why do you bury yourself in a dreadful country like this?"

"Because I have a mither an' twa auld aunts to support, an' Brazenbridge pays me better wages than I'd be earning at home. If it weren't for that I would ha' stayed at home an' sought a call to the meenistry. Ye may think that the meenistry can be doing without a drunken body like me, but I hadna' the thirst when I was at home. It's the loneliness that causes it, an' the having nothing to do, whiles, but sit and think thoughts that nae decent man should think. I'd ha' liked fine to be a meenister. Ah, weel! If I'm to tak' command, I'll ha' to get busy. 'The Consul was the foremost man to tak' in hand an axe,' as Macaulay says. I'll go chop wood."

All the men, white and black, Riflemen and mission natives, cut down branches of thorn trees that the women dragged in and interlaced between the upright posts of the stockade. Winifred helped. The thorns tore her delicate hands—but she was glad of it; it made her feel less utterly useless, less like a weakling who needs protection and can give nothing in return. When night fell they lighted brush-fires to give them light, and toiled on.

It made a weird scene, the firelight on the glistening bodies of the sweating blacks coming out of the gloom and disappearing again, the dancing shadows, the deep gloom beyond, and the impassive arch of star-strewn sky above. Winifred felt that she was dreaming a dream, not an evil dream but a very curious one. Though she knew that she might not live to see the sunrise, she could not believe it because her numbed mind refused to grasp it.

When it was decided that the stockade was as strong as there was time to make it, all were called in and the entrance was barricaded. Sentries were posted. The Riflemen borrowed a pot in which to cook their evening porridge, and the whites sat down to a meal for which Rock produced the best that the larder afforded on the ground that it was a pity to waste luxuries. When the meal was over, Duncan refused the suggestion that he should lie down till he was needed.

"I never can sleep when the thirst is on me," he said. "If ye dinna want to sleep yersel, Rock, I'd like it fine if ye'd sit an' talk. I'm verra much interested in predestination."

Winifred, preferring her own thoughts to other people's views on abstruse theology, went to her hut. Mrs. Rock followed her there.

"Mr. Rock wants me to stay with you till the end," she said. "But there is no need to be afraid. See, I have this revolver."

"My dear, don't you understand?" One bullet is for you, and the last for myself," said Mrs. Rock in her curiously even, passionless voice. "Mr. Rock has never let me be without a revolver after what we saw in the Baseni rebellion. The rising came very suddenly. Mr. Rock and I were



"'Let no man fire till I give the word, Sergeant; our lives mayn't be worth much, but we'll sell them for all we can get for them,' shouted Duncan, peering through a loophole that had been made when the stockade was strengthened."

Winifred's mind formed a ridiculous picture of herself and Mrs. Rock making a last stand, back to back, taking it in turns to shoot.

"But if we were driven to use that," she objected, "wouldn't it infuriate the savages all the more?"

spending the night at a village some miles from the mission station when it broke out. In the middle of the night one of the mission servants came, bringing with him our little son, that we had left at the station. He told us that the mission had been attacked and captured. He took us away and hid

us in a cave and kept us there for two days and nights, going out at night to get food and gather news. Then Mr. Rock decided that we must make our way to the Mounted Police post, fifty miles away; but first we went back to the mission to see if the rebels had left any food there that we could take for the journey. We approached it very cautiously, and when we got close there

"He died that day. The rebels must have seen us as we left the mission station with some tinned food that had not been looted, for soon we heard shouts from a distance. We ran down to a stream and waded along it so as not to leave footprints, and hid among the reeds on a little island. Soon we could hear the Baseni hunting up and down and calling to each other.



"The Padre's waving his arms at 'em. . . . He's preaching to 'em.'"

was no sign of movement—except the vultures pecking at the dead. The mission boys had died fighting, and so had Mr. Rock's colleague. But the murderers had taken Mrs. Harris, and even their little girl, a child of four, and placed them upright against the stockade and nailed the palms of their hands to the posts and left them like that. One could see that it had taken them a terrible long time to die."

Winifred shuddered and changed the subject.

"I did not know you had a son. Where is he?"

They came very close, and just then little Harold began to cry. Mr. Rock put his hand firmly over the poor child's mouth and kept it there till the Baseni went away. We tried artificial respiration, but it was too late. Unkind people said that Mr. Rock ought to have died before doing such a thing, but they had not seen what we had seen that day—a child, younger than our little Harold, crucified."

Winifred's blood curdled with horror. She absolutely agreed with Mr. Rock's critics. Fear of even the most terrible death, she thought, cannot excuse a man

for taking the life of his own child. But the shadow of death that hung over herself presently gave her a clearer understanding than is given to those who in leisured safety criticise the behaviour of others confronted with deadly peril. She realised that Mr. Rock did not kill his son to save his own life. Perhaps the thought that he was responsible for the life of the faithful servant who was trying to save all their lives at the hazard of his own, weighed with him. Certainly he had to save his wife, if he could, from a dreadful and lingering death. Perhaps most of all he thought it better that his little son should die quickly by his own hand than slowly at the hands of pitiless fiends.

"But I don't understand," she said presently. "That rebellion happened nearly twenty years ago, and I thought that you had a mission station among the Baseni until quite recently. Surely you did not go back to them, to that tribe of all others, when the rebellion was over?"

"Yes, we did. Just before the rebellion broke out, Mr. Rock had been arranging to give up foreign mission work and come home for little Harold's sake. It was impossible to keep him from making playmates with the native children, and I was afraid that he would pick up their foul talk and fouler ideas. But when he was taken from us our duty was clear, we no longer had any excuse for taking our hands from the plough. And it was among the Baseni more than among any other tribe that our duty lay. 'They know not what they do,' Mr. Rock said. So we went back to our mission as soon as the authorities would let us and began our work all over again. And we have had part of our reward to-day. Two of the men who declared this afternoon that they would stay here and die with us were among the party of murderers who hunted Mr. Rock and me and our little Harold among the reeds of that river."

Winifred had always vaguely felt an Englishwoman's natural pride in belonging to a conquering race. Now for the first time she realised that it is a conquering race because some of its members are unconquerable, and at the same time she realised how small was her own title to pride. She was not one of the unconquerable kind. She had broken her promise to marry a man who in his own sphere was inconspicuously doing work as grand, as self-sacrificing as that to which the Rocks had given their lives; because she was

reluctant to give up infinitely less noble work that made her conspicuous among smaller men; because she hated discomfort more than she valued his love; because she was too poor-spirited to gall her shoulders with the weight that conquerors must bear.

While she waited for death, Winifred was amazed to discover that she felt no fear. She knew that if she had had the chance to run away, indecision whether to run or not would have been agonising. But indecision was spared her, and she found herself waiting for the end calmly, even with some sense of exhilaration. She found comfort, too, in the thought that she would not survive the man she had deserted. But she wanted to live, if only to show that she was worthy to be the companion of such as Mrs. Rock.

After a seemingly endless night in which time seemed to stand still, black turned to grey. First the outline of the hut doorway became visible; then objects in the hut itself. Dawn had come at last. Winifred heard soft footsteps and a whisper.

"Are you awake, Jane? Come out, will you?"

Mrs. Rock rose and tiptoed out of the hut. Winifred heard the murmur of voices, the sound of a kiss. Then Mrs. Rock came back again.

"Wake up, Miss Neville; they are coming."

Winifred got up from the bed and went outside. From far away she could hear a sound like the snarling whine of an eager pack of wild dogs hot on the trail of an antelope.

"Walter is going to meet them," said Mrs. Rock. "He is going to stand somewhere where they cannot fail to see him. He is afraid that they will just hack him down and pass on, but if he can get them to listen to him even for a moment, there is just a chance that he may persuade them even now to sin no more than they have sinned already. They are coming from the direction of Mr. Darrell's *boma*, so I am afraid that it is useless to hope that they have not killed him."

Day was coming with dramatic suddenness. To the eastward a hill was starkly outlined against a band of light that changed from scarlet to gold, from gold to peacock green. All at once its smooth outline was broken by the silhouetted figures of hundreds of running men.

And now Winifred could clearly hear the terrible war-chant of the Wanazoa, but she

had so steeled her mind that it had no terrors for her; she was even thrilled to recognise, familiar as she was with the surge and thunder of Homeric verse, that she was listening to just such a song as the Greeks may have sung when they hurtled forward to the assault of the walls of Troy. It was a one-verse song that imitated the noise of the battle-field, and the rhythm was so perfect that she could clearly distinguish the sound of spear-blade clashing on spear-blade, followed by the grunt of a man who lunges with all his weight and strength.

In one solid mass, like a torrent in flood, the warriors poured down the hillside, breaking and re-uniting where big boulders blocked their way, leaping high over smaller obstacles, an avalanche of naked black figures, gleaming spears and tossing ostrich-plumes.

At the foot of the hill was a chest-deep stream that must inevitably check their rush. On its nearer bank Rock awaited them.

"Let no man fire till I give the word, Sergeant; our lives mayn't be worth much, but we'll sell them for all we can get for them," shouted Duncan, peering through a loophole that had been made when the stockade was strengthened. "The Padre's waving his arms at 'em. They're stopping to listen! He's preaching to 'em. They're palavering. They're turning back. Did ever ye see the like? They're turning back, I'm telling ye! They're ganging awa' as tame as elders ganging to kirk!"

All hurried to meet Rock as he came back to the entrance to the stockade. His face was white and drawn. He panted as if he had been running. He looked ten years older than he had looked when he got Darrell's letter. Steel-hard courage had sustained him while danger was imminent. Now that it passed, reaction had set in, and the weight of the ordeal he had gone through was on him. He staggered into the mess-hut and dropped limply on to a chair.

"All's well," he said feebly. "Those fellows are on our side. Yesterday when the news spread that Darrell's life was in danger, they banded together to fight on his side. When they got to his *boma* they found him safe and fast asleep. His servant came out and told them that when his would-be murderers found that he had made no preparations to resist them, they took fright at the extra-strong magic that they thought he must have up his sleeve."

"But what for were they singing that song?" asked Duncan. "They were out for somebody's bluid."

"On their way home they discussed matters and decided to get the head of the man responsible for the conspiracy against Darrell. They were hot on the war-path towards his village. I persuaded them to go quietly home. I said that they could see for themselves that Darrell is strong enough to fight his own battles."

* * * * *

Duncan returned to his store in comfort with a crew of Baseni to paddle his canoe. Winifred accompanied him to the water's edge.

"We've seen a miracle the morn, Miss Neville," he said, "and it isn't the smallest part of it that my thirst has gone from me. If ye offered me a glass of whusky at this identeeal moment, I wouldna' gie a thank you for it."

"I want to ask you something," said Winifred. "Next time you feel your thirst coming on, won't you come here and talk theology instead of drinking? I'll talk predestination with you all night if it will help you at all."

"But ye willna' be here. It's once a month the thirst comes on me. Ye'll be away in the *Lady o' the Lake* before it comes back."

"No, I shan't," said Winifred. "I'm going to stop here and learn the language so that I can translate the Gospels into it."

A further episode in the career of Peter Darrell will appear in the next number.



ENCORE

By JOAN SUTHERLAND

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

NADINE HILLYER pulled the red hat off her dark shingled head, dropped it on top of the red coat, and sat down in the chair nearest the fire, wrinkling her nose in disgust at the splashes on the slim beige silk legs she stretched out to its warmth.

"That's the second pair to-day!" she wailed. "Oh, why, *why* can't I wear Russian boots? What does it matter if they *are* bad style? I'm tired of changing stockings, anyway!"

From the tiny adjoining room fitted up as a kitchen, another voice answered her outcry.

"What's that, Nadine? Stockings? Oh, never mind—tea's ready, and there's toast."

She came in as she spoke, a squarely-built solid girl with a cheery smile and something very attractive in her plain face; and at sight of her Nadine's expression changed. Jumping up, she took from her the teapot and little covered dish, pushed her into the chair just vacated, and smiled.

"How nice! It's a filthy afternoon. . . . You look excited. What's happened?"

Mary Deane being a methodical person, waited until she had poured out the tea, then proceeded to answer.

"Leo Romaine has asked for me to accompany him next Thursday for his Queen's Hall Concert," she said. "His own accompanist is ill, and Lion and Hasler"—she spoke of the well-known concert agents—"spoke of me. Isn't it luck?"

"Luck?" Nadine kicked the fender viciously. "It's more than luck—for Heaven's sake, Mary, be a little excited! To play for Romaine—I'd give my soul for it!"

"Don't be so absurd, Nadine," Mary said. "Your soul is worth more than that—yes, I know you don't mean it literally, but still it's not all jam playing even for Romaine. I did once, before the war, before I knew you, you know, and he's horribly difficult."

"Temperamental?"

"No. He's too really great an artist to fly off the handle; but he expects perfection. He is quiet, but he gave me the impression that he could be merciless if one made a mistake."

"He has the right to be," Nadine said slowly, and lighting a cigarette stared into the fire. "Just think, Mary! You and I know a good deal about the hardships of professional life in music. You've won your place, I haven't, but I will—but think what it means to be acknowledged one of the two or three greatest violinists in the world, perhaps the greatest. It must be strange. Rather humbling—to feel one was the vehicle for so divine a gift."

Mary's sensible face changed a little, her eyes regarding the younger girl softened. When she spoke her voice was gentle.

"Yes, you will win your place, and it will be a greater one than mine, Nadine dear. You have the humility as well as the grit of the true artist. Bless you—"

Nadine's sudden flashing smile was very beautiful: reaching out, she patted her friend's knee, then went back to her absorbed contemplation of the dancing flames, and Mary's thoughts roamed backward. She had known Nadine personally for five years, they had lived together for only two, but their respective families had been friends; and both being orphaned by the war, Nadine had joined Mary in London to continue her musical education and fit herself for a professional career as a pianist. Mary Deane, a fine conscientious player, had won for herself the reputation of being the best accompanist in London, and earned a good income; she had talent and perseverance and the ability completely to submerge her own personality, whereas Nadine's talent was of a very different order. In her was a touch—only the brush perhaps of a moth's wing, but a touch, nevertheless—of true genius, allied to ambition, the power of hard work, and a sensitive, generous temperament. Life would hurt Nadine, and Mary who loved her knew it, and knew too that Life might

bring her rewards and joys such as she herself would never know.

As for Nadine, she sat leaning back in her chair, a cigarette between her fingers, staring into the flames, her thoughts far away with Romaine, that supreme artist, tall, dark, with steady grave eyes deeply grey, and a stern face. She always went to hear him whenever he played in London, and now for the first time she envied Mary with a bitter intensity. Mary would meet him, Mary would be associated with him, however humbly, Mary . . . and she did not seem overwhelmed with excitement or pleasure; and when a day or two later Mary had the programme, she amused herself by a game of pretence. Romaine was to engage her, not Mary, at the last moment; was to play as he had never played before, inspired by the perfection and beauty of the accompaniment. Afterwards he was to tell her of all it meant, was to say that never had he dreamed an accompaniment could mean so much. . . . Nadine would laugh at this juncture, wise enough to see the humour of so absurd a situation, and go back to her study of the programme.

Their flat was over a shop that sold would-be smart frocks, a funny little place—but central and convenient for their musical studies; and one day Nadine, passing Queen's Hall, saw a big print of a photograph outside it—Leo Romaine—and stood gazing at it with hungry eyes.

No highly-temperamental artist this, full of conceit and utterly selfish, but a well-bred, highly-educated man, trained to the last hair, with a set to his mouth that spoke of self-discipline and steadiness of purpose. A fine face—wistfully she studied it, then went on to the flat and let herself in. It was mid-afternoon, and to her surprise Mary was there seated close to the fire, and at her exclamation looked up.

"I came straight back from rehearsal, instead of going on to Mrs. Lulworth's," she said—Mrs. Lulworth was a wealthy amateur singer who had Mary three hours a week to play for her—"I felt seedy. Shivering and hot, and thinking of to-morrow, I thought I'd better rest."

"You certainly had," Nadine exclaimed. "Go straight to bed, Mary, and I'll get you a hot bottle and bring you a hot drink. Yes, you must, there's a dear."

Such advice was sound, and Mary took it, and Nadine waited on her and did all she could to get her fit again; but the night had evidently passed badly, for she was flushed

and heavy-eyed when Nadine went into her room at eight o'clock the next morning, although she insisted upon getting up.

"I've got to be at Queen's Hall at eleven," she said in answer to Nadine's protests. "It is Romaine's rehearsal. I'll be all right—it's only that my head is so funny—"

Nadine, realising the necessity, held her peace and tried to comfort herself by seeing Mary off in a taxi, despite the nearness of the hall, after a strong cup of beef-tea; but about a quarter-past one she was dismayed to hear the bell pealing vigorously, and to find on the threshold one of the concert hall's commissionaires with Mary clinging to his arm, flushed and dull-eyed. She managed to smile at Nadine, and when the man had left made no further protestations, but tumbled into bed.

"I fainted at the end—it's no good—I can't keep up any longer"—her voice was gasping and it was evident that she was in great discomfort, if not pain. "You'll have to get the doctor. Oh, Nadine—Romaine—what will he do?"

While Nadine awaited the doctor a wild thought flashed into her mind to be almost instantly dismissed, but a thought which recurred again and again, to crystallise an hour later into a definite decision. The doctor had come and gone; the verdict was a threatening of pneumonia, at present only a slight attack, but necessitating warmth and rest and the service of a nurse who was already established in the little flat and gave to it a comfortable air of security; and Nadine in her most attractive coat and hat, with a little buttonhole of red carnations pinned in the fur at her throat, stole out of the flat, summoned a taxi, and gave the address of the hotel.

On the way there she sat very upright, lips set in a hard line, eyes bright, hands pressed together; and on arrival she inquired for Monsieur Romaine, and sent up a card on which she had written a brief note of Mary's illness and a request that the great violinist would see her for two or three minutes.

She waited—outwardly quite calm, a very attractive, slender figure, but her nerves were taut and her breath was quick and uneven; she could hardly believe that it was herself, Nadine Hillyer, waiting to see Romaine with the intention of putting before him a proposition that even to herself was audacious. When a page came up and asked her to follow him she was very pale, but she followed composedly and was shown

into a sitting-room whose only difference from the usual hotel room was the presence of a boudoir grand pianoforte and a violin stand near the window. For the first instant she thought it was empty, then she saw a man rise from a chair by the fire, and found herself face to face with Romaine.

He was taller than she thought, lean yet broad-shouldered, with the build of an athlete rather than an artist, and suddenly realising all her presence meant, she stood

were the most eloquent and imploring he had ever seen, a look that tugged suddenly and amazingly at his heart-strings, and taking hold of a chair, he placed it for her.

"Miss Hillyer?" he said, with only a hint of foreign accent in his voice. "Yes? Please sit down—near the fire. It is so cold."

She nodded, sat down, forced herself to speak.

"Yes. Terribly. Monsieur Romaine—Mary Deane is my friend.



"Because I—I have always wanted to play for you—ever since I heard you first—nine years ago. I have worked because of that."

for a moment quite silent, just looking at him, the colour draining out of her face. And Romaine saw a girl in red, slender and young, looking up at him with eyes that

She's ill—very. It's pneumonia, and the doctor——"

He interrupted her, yet without any seeming discourtesy.

"Yes. I know. I am distressed for her sake. I have sent to Lion and Hasler. But perhaps——" He hesitated, then changed what he was about to say.

"You wished to see me about something—it was perhaps that I set her mind at rest about the concert?"

"No. No. That's not possible. She's worrying—she can't help it. No one could

never believed she would dare to make; and Romaine stood looking at her, not speaking, but studying her face with intent, keen eyes.



"‘Come and play this for me,’ he said, and picking up his violin, waited while she took off coat and gloves."

help it. But, Monsieur, I—I can accompany. I accompany well—Mary knows it. Will you let me play for you instead?"

It was out—the request that she had

He was silent so long that Nadine grew impatient with sheer nerves, and was just about to get up and leave him when he spoke abruptly:

"Do you know the programme?"

Eyes dilating with excitement, Nadine rose to her feet.

"Yes. I've practised it ever since I knew what you were to play."

His intent gaze changed slightly, softened, became more personal.

"But—why?"

A wave of colour, faint and lovely, crept up from Nadine's throat to her brow; for the first time shyness of him as a man, not as an artist, touched her.

"Because I—I have always wanted to play for you—ever since I heard you first—nine years ago. I have worked because of that."

He opened his lips to speak, took a step towards her, then checked himself, and stood for a second or two looking intently at his strong fine finger-tips as if in them he saw something to aid his decision. When the silence had, to Nadine, grown almost unbearable, he went over to the piano, touched a piece of music lying there, and spoke abruptly.

"Come and play this for me," he said, and picking up his violin, waited while she took off coat and gloves, gave him his A, and played the introductory bars. For the first few minutes natural nervousness dominated her, then the beauty and power of the music gripped her, and personal matters were forgotten. He did not say a word when she had finished except to place another piece of music on the stand, and for nearly an hour she accompanied him till, as abruptly as he had begun, he ceased playing, put down his violin, and taking her hands, pulled her gently to her feet.

"At eight to-night!" he said. "Now sit down and rest, and we'll have some tea."

Nadine made no answer except to give him a sudden dazzling smile—she was exhausted and triumphant at the same moment; but when he had ordered tea and given her a cigarette, she spoke.

"You'll really let me play?" she said. "You're satisfied?"

He nodded, smiling for the first time during that interview.

"Quite. Are you?"

"Me? I'm bewildered! I can't believe that I dared come and ask you."

He laughed, his eyes studying her face with a look no longer coldly professional.

"Do you know that I am very glad you did? And my reason has nothing whatever to do with the concert to-night."

Nadine knocked the ash from her cigarette with extreme care.

"You are—amusing yourself by flattering me," she said slowly. "Don't. I'm at your mercy, you see. I've been quite frank with you. Don't laugh at me."

"Amusement was the last thing in my mind!" he returned. "If we are going to understand each other, you must not jump to conclusions. Listen to me. I am staying five days in London. Will you dine with me to-morrow night?—anywhere you choose—and we will either go to a theatre or dance or talk, but I warn you I am not a very good dancer."

"Dine?" Nadine's eyes widened, her breath quickened. "Dine—with you?"

"Yes. Why not? I'm not an ogre and I've no evil designs upon you."

The absurdity of the idea as well as its unexpected delightfulness struck Nadine at the same instant, and throwing her fears to the wind, she laughed.

"I'd adore to! Let's go and dine and just talk. I hardly ever go out to dinner, and I love it, and I don't want to dance or go to a theatre. I'd rather listen to you talking."

"I said *we* would talk!" he said pointedly. "Are you going to be 'beautiful and dumb'?"

At the Americanism she laughed again, then rose to her feet.

"I mustn't stay any longer. We both ought to rest, and you might repent of your invitation. What time am I to be in the artists' room?"

"Ten minutes to eight. Be prepared for two encores only at the end. One of them will be the Viennois Caprice of Kreisler's, the other some equally light thing. Now au revoir till to-night."

He took her down himself and saw her into a taxi, then he went back to his sitting-room and, lighting a pipe, sat down in front of the fire, frowning yet smiling, and feeling again the cool close grasp of her hand in his.

The artists' room at Queen's Hall, with its centre table and red chairs; from somewhere beyond the walls the murmur and stir of a big audience, and in the room itself Nadine, icily cold as to feet and hands, with a queer unsteadiness in her breathing.

There seemed to be so many people about. . . . Where was Romaine, why didn't he come . . . Surely nothing had happened, no accident—and at the thought a pang of terror shot through her; then she laughed at herself for being an idiot, and tried to steady her jumping nerves. After all, she knew the programme to the last bar; she had

worked at it, Romaine had been satisfied four hours ago, and the audience would take no notice of her, anyway. Romaine, entering, saw her standing by the table flexing and unflexing her strong slim fingers; and as he came in and at the sight of her his heart missed a beat and quickened, then he went on to speak to the manager, and a minute later took his precious violin from its case, lifted it, and tried the strings.

Less than five minutes later he spoke to her.

"Ready?" he said. "Frightened?" And she nodded. "Horribly!" she said, but answered his smile, and he took her hand and gave it a quick, close pressure.

"It will be all right," he said very gently. "It is only the first moment or two. Play as you played for me this afternoon. After all, what do the others matter?"

She squared slim, white shoulders and threw up her head.

"I know . . . that it is only you," she said rather low, and then he went out through the door somebody held open, and they were in sight of the audience.

Nadine was conscious of a roar of applause and blur of light and colour; then she was at the piano, and Romaine was waiting for her to strike the note. He tuned again a mere hair's-breadth on one string, then nodded to her, and she began the César Franck Sonata in A Major, which was his opening number.

To herself, her fingers for the first few minutes seemed to be blocks of wood, the keys unresponsive; then suddenly she forgot everything but the music, and from thenceforward played for one person and one person only.

In the interval he went into an inner room and saw no one, and when the end of the programme was reached he made her respond to the final applause, taking her hand and kissing it; then as the audience shouted for a further encore, he spoke to her in a quick undertone:

"You're not too tired? You can do it?"

"Yes," she said. "Yes—anything!"

He turned away and lifted his bow, and radiant and excited she gave herself up to the joy of sound, of listening to him; and then with a pang of horror was aware something was happening—that the beautiful sounds were discords, that she had lost her place. . . . Wildly she stumbled, tried to catch him up, to see where he had got to, to find the place on the sheet of music before her. Then some subconscious sense made

her take her hands from the keys, and he went on playing alone, finished the encore alone, and she sat there dazed with the horror of the thing that had happened.

In that same daze she saw him bowing, heard the roar of applause, saw him turn to walk off the platform, dared not look at him, but followed blindly.

In the artists' room she waited for no one. As he passed her to go back on the platform and take his calls she turned her back, and he had no time to speak to her, surrounded as he was by his manager, the manager of the hall and the press already trying to get near. As he went through the doorway she hurried off to get her coat and hat; and outside the Queen's Hall, since the crowd had not yet come out, she jumped into a taxi, and hardly realising the reason for what she was to do, she told the man to drive to Leland's Hotel.

At the hotel, acting like one in a dream, she went in, asked for paper and envelope, saying she had an important message for Mr. Romaine; and since she had been seen with him in the afternoon, there was no difficulty. It only took a moment to write the note—there was so little to say—and then once more she was out in the street in the cold winter night, walking northward, blinded by the wind which brought tears to her eyes with its biting sting. She was hardly conscious of the lateness of the hour, of her fatigue, of her surroundings. Nothing filled her mind but the one awful fact—that she had failed, that she had forgotten that she was a subordinate part, that she had lost her place, had made a fiasco, had failed when he trusted her.

Somehow she got back to the flat, rang the bell, and was admitted by the nurse. Yes, Mary was better; she was sleeping and must not be disturbed. Nadine supposed she was glad, if she could be glad of anything, but she was stunned by what had happened. She did not know what she answered to the nurse. She simply passed her, went into her room, locked the door, and dropped down on to her bed, seeing over again that vast crowd, hearing once again the beauty of the music, the glorious sound about her, and then the awful blunder of the wrong chords. In recurring waves of shame and misery she experienced every instance of that awful moment. To her confused mind the break, the chaos, was infinitely worse than it had really been.

How the night passed she never knew. She supposed she slept, since at last the square of her window grew palely grey; and

she arose tired, listless, heartbroken. After all, what was the good of her ambition? What was the good of her work? At the first test she had failed, and failed for such a man at such a time—the one great opportunity in life! She was too young, too highly strung to realise that everyone must fail at some time if they are to do any good or to make any success of the career they have chosen. She was too young to moralise, too young to find comfort anywhere. She could only think of the man she had idolised from childhood, his trust in her as an artist, and her failure.

The nurse came to her when she left her room, telling her Mary would like to see her, but Nadine made some excuse. For the first time in her life she could not see her friend—could not even feel interested in Mary's progress. Like one in a dream she went into the little sitting-room, drank some tea, found she could not eat, and wandered miserably about. It was nearly ten o'clock when the hall door bell rang, and thinking it was the doctor, she hurried to open it, flung the door wide, and then started back, all the colour leaving her face, for there in the flesh was Romaine. For a second she stared at him as if he had been a ghost; then, never taking his eyes from her face, he spoke.

"May I come in?" he said. And grasping at some remnant of her self-control, she drew back and opened the sitting-room door behind her. What he had come for she could not imagine, unless it were to tell her that she had wrecked his concert, that never again did he wish to see her. She watched him take off his coat, lay hat and stick aside—she had forgotten to ask him to do so in the hall—watched him, white-lipped, with dilated eyes, and it was almost stupidly that she waited for him to speak.

He came across the room to her, and she saw with horror that he had a letter in his hand—her letter—the miserable, incoherent little note she had written last night at the hotel. Yet he did not look angry—his face was grave, but there was a curious look in his eyes she did not understand. Coming across the room, he held out the note.

"You wrote that for me last night," he said. "Why didn't you wait to see me? I looked everywhere for you at Queen's Hall. They told me at the hotel you had been there. Why didn't you wait?"

Amazed at his tone as much as his words, she looked up.

"Wait?" she echoed. "Why, how could

I? You didn't want to see me. Besides—I was afraid!"

"Afraid?" he echoed almost violently, then checked himself. "Didn't I?" he said. "You're wrong there." And then, putting the letter aside, he took her hand in his.

"My dear," he said, "why didn't you trust me? I understood. I knew. You poor child!"

Nadine looked up and tried to speak, and afterwards he told her that at that moment he was absolutely certain of a thing he had hardly been able to believe—that strange, unexpected something that had happened yesterday when he saw her in his sitting-room at the hotel.

"I couldn't wait," she repeated. "I ruined it. You trusted me. I spoilt it all."

"Spoilt it? Nonsense. No one noticed. Probably half a dozen people wondered why I finished those two bars alone—it was only two bars. My dear, don't cry. There's nothing to cry about. Nadine, listen!"

Nadine! He had called her Nadine! He was holding her hands, looking down at her. Why was he looking at her? A different feeling began to mingle with her dull sense of misery. He was not angry—that she realised. He was not only not angry, but he was looking at her in a way that made her shiver with a strange new emotion, and then, still holding her hands, he drew her down to the couch, sitting beside her.

"Nadine," he said. "Yesterday, when you came to see me, in that first moment when I saw you standing there alone in my room, I knew you were going to mean more to me than any woman had ever meant in my life before. I was sure of it. My dear, I am years older than you—I am a complete stranger to you—but listen to me. Don't refuse what I am going to ask—not at once. Have patience with me. Nadine, my dear, I don't know if you believe in love in one moment. I've laughed at it. We most of us have. We think it is just a romantic boy-and-girl affair. Well"—he smiled suddenly—"it is romantic enough. You understand what I am trying to tell you, little one? Yesterday I knew I had fallen in love, and last night all I wanted was to take you in my arms and comfort you, and you had gone. When you had gone, when I found that pitiful little letter"—his deep voice shook a little and he tightened his grasp of her hand and repeated his words—"all I wanted was to take you in my arms and comfort you, tell you I

loved you, tell you that I wanted you to be my wife, to beg you to marry me—no, wait; not now; you have got to learn to know me. I understand that . . . but oh, my dear, my darling . . . don't send me away."

His words were almost meaningless in Nadine's ears. She was conscious of his arms about her, and his lips on hers, of an amazing tumult of feeling that surged through her; and then the real meaning of what he was saying began to penetrate her mind. With a struggle she freed herself, pushing him back.

"Don't! Don't!" she cried. "You don't mean it. You are playing with me. Or you are just sorry. You think I am so miserable that you must do something to help me, but I couldn't bear you doing this. Please just go away and forget all this morning."

He did not attempt to take her again, but stood looking at her, and this time he was smiling a little.

"Dearest, you are talking nonsense," he said. "Do you think I should want to marry any woman because I was sorry for her? Do you think for one single minute that I don't know my own feelings for you? I am not a boy, Nadine, and I know my world; and I tell you that I love you as I never believed it possible I should love anyone. I have been content to be alone with my music, and my life as an artist has been sufficient until yesterday. Nadine, dear, you must believe me when I say that if you will not marry me I will never look at another woman, and my whole life will fall short of what it should be."

Still unbelieving; she drew another pace back from him.

"But don't you see I am nobody," she said. "I am just a girl with a certain amount of talent trying to make a living at playing. What would people say to you, your friends, if I married you?"

He took a stride across the room and took hold of her arms above the elbows.

"They would say I am a very lucky man," he said, his slight foreign accent suddenly stronger. "See, Nadine . . . I am not asking you to marry me at once. That wouldn't be fair. You know nothing about me yet. But I am asking you to regard me as the man you may marry, if only you will. Give me a chance to make you care, will you, Nadine—will you?"

It was ten minutes later when the nurse, thinking that it was about time Nadine visited her patient, opened the door of the little sitting-room, began, "Will you please—," and stopped short. She was a quick-witted woman. She had heard a little from Mary of the excitement Mary's illness had caused, and the difficulty with regard to Romaine; so now after a moment, and after having closed the door very quietly, she opened it again and said in a cheerful, business-like voice:

"Miss Hillyer, I think Miss Deane would like to see you. She is very much better, and she wants to hear all about the concert." She studiously avoided looking at Romaine, which was a credit to her self-control, and leaving the door open, marched back into the sick-room, and Mary was a little surprised at her speedy return.

"Isn't Nadine coming?" she began, and then stopped, for Nadine stood in the doorway, and hand in hand with her, looking ten years younger, and immensely proud of himself, stood Romaine.

A NIGHT OF WIND.

NO summer evenfall is here,
But havoc of their lord the wind
In trees the morning will find bare.

He strikes the hedgerow, revels blind
Down the bare road, and sweeps the moon
A dark and tattered cloud behind.

The wind, maybe, will rest him soon,
The moon be tranquil, but, alas!
This night has ended summer's tune.

ERIC CHILMAN.

THE SHY YOUNG MAN

By FRANK SWINNERTON

ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING

WEARILY, Ruth put the cover over her typewriter. She stood for a moment after she had done this, sighing, her fingers pressing hot, tired eyes. The little room in which she worked alone was breathless, with glass partitions carried right to the ceiling of the office. It was very ugly and dull, with putty-coloured match-boarding to the height of her shoulders and frosted glass for another four feet. Standing in the tiny room, Ruth looked very slight in her plain blue dress; her brows were drawn, and there was a pallor upon her cheeks that hid her real prettiness and made her appear sallow.

The day had been such a long one—it was nearly eight o'clock, and the late summer sky was already greying—that Ruth was quite exhausted. Now that she was free at last to go home, she was conscious of a strange heaviness in her head, like a crushing weight, and a cramped stiffness in her limbs, a listlessness. Her thoughts were confused with fragments of Mr. Scruter's dictation, vague strainings after details which she was to remember and of which she was to remind him. Since ten o'clock this morning she had been stabbing at the keys of her machine, typing letter after letter, endless notes, lists, and draft paragraphs for letters, notes, and lists which—appalling task!—were to be typed on the morrow.

"He's a *glutton*," Ruth thought. She was still busy with Mr. Scruter, who was manager of Tuxalls. "He loves work. He hates to leave off. And hates *me* to leave off. One of these days I shall die; and he'll cluck his tongue at the interruption, and have me swept up to make room for somebody else."

The thought made her smile; but it also explained why, when her typewriter was covered, she could not immediately move

away from it. Her eyes burned, her fingers ached, her thoughts were quite stale and jumbled. Only with an effort did she turn to the little wash-basin in the room, bathe her face, and prepare in sudden frenzy to run away from it all, to her home.

Home! Ruth shook her head. Then she wondered why she had shaken her head.

II.

It was nine o'clock before she reached home—a very small flat in a West London suburb, where she lived with her mother and sister. Ruth trudged along, faint with hunger, and the road, which opened imposingly enough near the railway station, began to dwindle, so that one had the sense of increasingly narrow doorways and increasingly cheap glass, of more inescapable ugliness and poverty. And at last she reached the entrance to Southcroft Mansions, and was preparing to mount the stone stairs, when she became aware of a very tall, very fair, awkward, shy young man who was hovering in the porch.

This young man was dressed in a light tweed suit, with a rather large, protruding black tie and an unstarched collar; and his soft black hat—which he lifted at her approach—was awry, as if he were rather careless about his appearance; and he had a long face, clean-shaven, with a slightly twisted nose and a good-natured mouth which showed large strong teeth. But he was so shy that even as he addressed Ruth he had great difficulty in meeting her frank, astonished glance. He stammered. Odd that one so evidently well-bred should stammer from shyness! Was she unusually alarming? The thought delighted Ruth, and she endeavoured to look grim.

"Er . . . excuse me . . ." said the shy young man. "But . . . er . . . I can't

see any . . . I've forgotten the number I . . . er . . ."

And with that he began slightly to redden.

A burglar?

"Have you forgotten the name, too?" asked Ruth, a little dryly.

"Er . . . no . . ." said the shy young man. "Mine . . . er . . . Mine's Denny. I . . . er . . . I'm looking . . . I mean . . . I w-want to find w-where Miss Sisley lives . . ."

"She lives at the top. Number Sixteen," said Ruth. "*I'm* Miss Sisley."

The young man looked at her with great astonishment.

"Oh," said he quickly. "Oh . . . er . . . I thought . . . Oh, I see . . . er . . . There are two of you!"

One of Adeline's beaux! Ruth's eyebrows lifted. A new one. New—they were legion! Was it envy that stirred in her heart? Or pity?

"You'd better come up with me," she said, amiably enough. "It's a walk. We haven't a lift."

Together, and in silence, they ascended the stairs. Ruth opened the door of the flat, and the shy young man followed her meekly into the exceedingly small passageway, in which there was hardly room for them both. It was quite dark, until she switched on the light.

III.

THE flat was all upon the same scale as the vestibule. There was a living-room, there were two bedrooms, and there was a kitchen which was just large enough to hold a table, cooking apparatus, and a dresser. The cook (who was mother to Ruth and Adeline) could not sit down if she was tired. Therefore the living-room was parlour and dining-room and boudoir combined; and as they entered Ruth was thankful that it was not being used as a boudoir, or even—as it frequently happened was the case—as a dressmaking establishment. Mrs. Sisley and Adeline, having long ago finished their supper, were waiting for Ruth. Ruth's supper was set upon a corner of the large table in the centre of the room.

Mrs. Sisley was a white, dried, and frigid woman with a narrow head carrying a small stock of thin grey hair. She had lost a number of her side teeth, and her cheeks were accordingly sunken, and her mouth small. She had all her front teeth, and she showed them now, as always, in a somewhat pinched smile. She was dressed tightly in

black. Pale, rather hard and insincere eyes shone above a sharp nose. There was an indescribable anxiety in her manner, as if she were watching. She had been a widow for ten years; and life had been hard. It was easier now that both girls were earning money. Not yet perfectly easy, however, as Mrs. Sisley's demeanour showed. She was thinking of the future.

Adeline, the belle of the family, two years younger than Ruth, and at this time twenty-two, was sitting scanning a fashion paper. She was fairer and plumper than Ruth, was more vivacious, and was particularly attractive to young men. She had none of her mother's air of anxiety, but had a little of her hardness, which in Adeline's case took the form of self-possession. She, like her sister, was wearing a blue dress, but it was of a lighter blue, and was less severe in cut. It was enchanting. Adeline looked up from her fashion paper as the new-comers entered, and her cheeks dimpled in welcome.

"Hullo, Marcus!" she cried, jumping to her feet as if she were greeting an old friend.

Marcus! Ruth looked quickly at the shy young man, saw that he was beaming and advancing towards Adeline with considerably reduced shyness, sighed, glanced at her supper, at her mother. . . . She saw that lady's expression of pinched cordiality, saw the increased anxiety in the pale eyes, knew that Mrs. Sisley was asking herself the eternal question—"Is he well-off?" Ruth understood her mother very well—too well,—and realised that Mrs. Sisley had but one thought, which was to marry Adeline handsomely. As for Ruth—why, Ruth was Ruth, and had no place in such schemes. She was not beautiful, and she was not the apple of her mother's eye. A soft, uncontrollable smile of understanding, pity, even love, rose from Ruth's heart to her eyes, to her lips. Then, suddenly, she found that Marcus was for the first time looking directly at herself. He had surprised her smile, and was returning it. The shy young man! Marcus! Ruth smiled again.

IV.

ADELINE, it appeared, had first met Marcus at a studio party—she had forgotten how long ago. Perhaps a month. She liked studio parties, and danced, romped, and sat upon the floor as if she had been going to studio parties all her life. At home she was more demure. She looked roughly

now from her bright eyes, and chattered with vivacity. Ruth, coming back from the kitchen, to which place she had unobtrusively transferred her supper, eating it on foot, was pleased to find quite a happy trio. Her re-entry was unnoticed, because Marcus was giving an account of a wealthy patroness whose portrait he was painting.

"Incredible!" he was saying in his funny, half-jovial, stammering way. His shyness was less powerful. "I can't get her to remove the smirk."

"I should paint it," cried Adeline. "Serve her right."

"Oh, but she's not a bit like it. Ordinarily, I mean. It would be cruel."

directly. Instead, as Ruth slipped into a chair, he turned to Adeline.

"I w-wonder if y-your sister would . . . er . . . I mean . . ."

"Oh, Ruth never goes out," cried Adeline. "She's a regular stay-at-home. Aren't you, Ruth?"

Adeline was frowning. Ruth understood very well what her expression meant. The sweetness had faded from it.

"No, I never go out," she said, rather dryly. She did not say why. But she knew why.

"But I w . . ." The shy young man hesitated, looking up at her, dropped his eyes, turned again to Adeline. Ruth's



"She set the sparkling thing upon a finger, a finger of her left hand, and held her hand up so that the light made brilliant sparks come from the thing which was set upon the finger."

"Why cruel? She must think it becoming."

"She can't know how it looks. She hasn't seen it."

"Poor simple boy!" sighed Adeline. "When she must have spent hours—"

They were indeed friendly! Ruth could not have achieved such conversational freedom with a shy young man under an acquaintance of at least *six* months. She doubted if she could ever have achieved it. Could she? It was a problem. Ruth cocked her head reflectively, feeling quite outside the group. But now Marcus had seen her, and was upon his feet, once again rather constrained. He could think of nothing to say to her. Indeed, beyond showing by his discomfort that he was aware of Ruth's presence, he did not address her

heart, which had fizzed at the beginning of his protest, sank with his eyes. It wasn't too pleasant to be forcibly set upon the shelf. "Never mind," she told herself. "Later . . . later . . ." She meant, that one day she would be free.

"Well, then, *you'll* c-come," added Marcus, appealing to Adeline.

"Indeed I will. Thursday. Lovely!" Adeline nodded joyously, her high spirits quite restored. Ruth saw her happy smile—the smile of a child.

"And I w-wish . . ." Marcus could get no farther. His eyes glanced at Ruth, flew away, and he stood awkwardly. A moment later he was gone.

Adeline returned, humming.

"Slow old thing!" she observed, still gaily. "But awfully clever. I wonder

he ever thinks of anything to say to his sitters."

"Is he a very good painter?" asked Ruth.

"I don't know. They *say* he is." Adeline picked up her fashion paper.

"You should get him to paint *you*," Ruth said.

"Oh, he's going to," answered Adeline, half indifferent. "I said he'd *got* to."

Ah, lucky girl! thought Ruth. Mrs. Sisley had in her head another notion altogether.

"Portrait painters make a good deal of money, don't they?" she asked, as if anxiously.

V.

It was strange how often Ruth thought of Marcus in the next few days. His tall, awkward figure, which was not ungraceful, but colt-like, rose frequently in her memory. While she was taking down Mr. Scruter's solemn dictation, and wondering whether he would next bite his thumb or scratch his head or smooth his eyebrows with an abstracted finger, she found herself seeing that rough light tweed suit, and the full black tie, and the long face with the twisted nose and the wide smile. Every time she thought of Marcus she smiled.

Thursday came, and Ruth and her mother sat at home, sewing, while Adeline danced off to Marcus's party. She returned early in the morning, plunged into her little bed, which was across the room from Ruth's, and was instantly asleep. Ruth lay imagining all the fun which Adeline must have shared during the evening, and when she fell asleep again she dreamed that after all she had been at the party, in the background, watching the fun and relishing it.

This dream remained with her all day; and in the evening, as she walked home from the railway station, she thought herself still dreaming when she caught sight of Marcus walking towards her. He seemed to stare, to hesitate, as though he hardly recognised her. Then he snatched off his hat, half stopped, smiled, looked very straight at her—and passed. It seemed to Ruth that he had probably been too shy to speak; but none the less his abrupt failure to do so sent a little pain to her heart. Did he dislike her? Glancing over her shoulder, in spite of every determination not to do so, Ruth saw him striding onward at great speed, away from her.

VI.

UPON the Saturday afternoon, as soon as she had eaten her lunch, Adeline dressed very carefully and went out, saying nothing to the others of her destination. After a time, Ruth also left the flat, and went to call upon some friends. She stayed with them for about two hours, and then returned home. And as she went into the living-room, she was astonished to find that Marcus stood there. He was alone. He was by the fireplace, with his head down, a little pale; and as he saw Ruth he seemed to become more awkward than ever. What had happened? The dread that she had in some way aroused his dislike revived in her heart. There was no sign in the room of either Adeline or her mother.

"Y-your sister's had . . . had an accident," stammered Marcus. "F-fell in the river. I brought her . . . home. Your mother's p-putting her to bed."

"Is she hurt?" asked Ruth.

"I d-don't think so. You see, she w-was in a canoe . . . w-with a man who can't swim. Got rather wet, I'm afraid."

"You look as if *you* were rather wet!" cried Ruth. "You are! You're soaked! Oh, you ought to hurry home. You'll catch cold."

Marcus grinned. For the first time he was able to look at Ruth without giving her the impression that he disliked doing so. It was a very pleasant experience for Ruth to see his frank, cheerful eyes. They were very clear and beautiful eyes.

"I'm g-going in a minute," he said. "Must stay and see all's well . . ." With which statement he began most violently to sneeze. "At-chah! At-chah! At . . ."

Alarmed, both for Adeline and for Marcus, Ruth hastened to the bedroom, to find that Adeline was snugly between blankets, and her mother standing near the bed. Adeline looked none the worse for the accident.

"That poor young man's soaked to the skin," Ruth cried, when she had ascertained that Adeline was well. "He's sneezing all over the room."

"He's a hero!" cried Mrs. Sisley devoutly. "He may sneeze anywhere he likes. I must go back at *once*, and thank him for saving Addie's life."

And with that she went out of the room, leaving Ruth sitting upon Adeline's bed. They looked at one another, almost drolly. The two of them heard Mrs. Sisley's voice in the next room, going up and down, up

and down, until both stirred uneasily. Both knew what she was saying. "Can't thank you . . . *Can't* . . . My little Adeline. My darling . . . A mother, Mr. Denny . . . How can I *thank* . . ." They exchanged a second glance.

"Go and stop her!" commanded Adeline. "He hates that sort of thing. And it's not as though I can't swim."

The outer door slammed. Marcus had taken to flight.

VII.

THE next evening saw him back again, however. He seemed bent upon showing his concern with the family, and came armed with a box of *marrons glacés* for the invalid. When he found that she was up and well, he expressed astonishment. In doing so, he sneezed vigorously, and brought three pairs of eyes accusingly upon himself.

"It's not you who should be coming to ask after me; it's *I* who should be coming to ask after you, Marcus!" cried Adeline.

"Adeline!" murmured Mrs. Sisley. "Dear child!" It was the most gentle protest.

"However, I'll eat the *marrons*. Thanks!"

"Adeline is always so high-spirited. She's very *healthy*, Mr. . . . Mr. Marcus," continued Mrs. Sisley. "Has always been so. It means so much . . . in good-nature, in sweetness."

Adeline sighed loudly.

"Have a *marron*, Marcus?" she said, as an interruption. "They're good for colds."

There was a ring at the front-door bell. Ruth, answering it, saw standing without another young man. To her sharp eye it was evident that this other young man also had a severe cold. Putting two and two together, Ruth came to the conclusion that this other young man (who was not at all *shy*) was the unlucky cause of the accident. He was as unlike Marcus as any young man could be. He was very dark, for one thing, and looked as spick and span as a bank-clerk. He wore pince-nez, had a long thin nose and a long thin mouth.

"Miss Sisley? I'm Aubrey Ramsden. I overturned a canoe yesterday. Your sister . . ."

"Come in, Mr. Ramsden." Ruth could not keep her brows steady. They *would* jerk up and down when she wanted to laugh.

The young man preceded her confidently into the room. She saw him stop dead, and stiffen, at sight of Marcus.

"Hullo, Marcus," he said coldly, when he had greeted the others.

"None the worse, I hope," Marcus stammered, looking gigantically down upon the new-comer. "I . . . I . . . I mean, none the worse, eh?"

They stood looking at each other, Ruth thought, like jealous dogs. She had the strongest possible inclination to laugh and cry simultaneously. "Rescuer and Rescued!" she thought. "How English they are!" And then she looked at Adeline. "They're both in love with her, poor dears," she told herself. "How sorry I am for both of them."

For Adeline was being stared at awkwardly by both young men; and Adeline, coolly mistress of the situation, was in the act of offering Aubrey one of Marcus's *marrons glacés*. Of the two, Aubrey was most clearly in need of Ruth's sympathy. He had come without a present. He had been the cause of the accident. He had been humiliated by his inability to swim. He even owed his life to Marcus. He had arrived late. What chance had he in the struggle? None whatever! Was it not common form that the rescuer carried off the lady?

From Marcus, accordingly, Ruth switched her pity quickly to Aubrey, although it must be admitted that whereas Marcus had fired her imagination, Aubrey seemed to be insignificant, sleek, and altogether without attractiveness.

"He could never have any chance, anyway," thought Ruth. "Poor young man! And now he's lost it entirely."

With which thought she glanced at her mother, who was surveying the new-comer with an expression in which coldness struggled with rancour.

"A healthy constitution, Mr. Marcus . . ." Mrs. Sisley began. She was interrupted.

"At-choo! At-choo!" said both young men, simultaneously.

VIII.

AUBREY showed himself a most accomplished talker. He had been to all the new plays, had met all the actors and actresses, the people who wrote about the plays in the newspapers. He had "views" upon art, literature, and politics. He monopolised the conversation. Rather stupefied by his eloquence, Ruth felt that she was half dozing. She awoke to find her mother staring at Aubrey with the greatest dislike, while Aubrey talked about things of which only Adeline—it appeared—had ever heard.

Certainly, Ruth knew nothing of them. And as for Marcus—she turned to look over her shoulder at Marcus, who had been sitting very quiet.

Her astonishment was inexpressible when she discovered that the silent Marcus, so far from paying any attention to what Aubrey said, was actually engaged in making, upon the back of an envelope, a sketch of herself. He was so intent upon his task that it was an instant before he looked up, saw her surprise, reddened, grinned, and put the envelope back into his pocket. He then did a very peculiar thing. Still smiling, he put his finger gently to his lips, to show that she was not to comment upon his action.

"Of course, she's *absolutely* temperamental," gassed Aubrey.

Mrs. Sisley blinked, to conceal the wave of disgust which was at that moment crossing her face. She looked quickly away from Aubrey, and directly at Marcus; and as she did so her expression changed extraordinarily. Ruth had never seen her smile so warmly.

"I think you—" Confusedly, Ruth checked herself. She had been about to address Marcus in a low tone, and just as she had begun to speak had thought better of it. But her confusion seemed to spur Marcus. He rose to his feet and grasped Aubrey by the shoulder.

"Come along, Aub," he said. "T-time we w-went."

Aubrey was a child in that gigantic grasp. He rose, still sleek, but with a slightly crest-fallen air. To Ruth, standing aside, it was painfully amusing to see how her mother glared in shaking hands with Aubrey, and how she beamed at Marcus.

"Yes, *do*," Ruth heard her say to Marcus. "*Any* evening."

And as she spoke, Mrs. Sisley drew Adeline to her side, as if to show by her action that she and Adeline were associated. But she addressed no such word to the retiring Aubrey. Indeed, she regarded him as she might have regarded a toad or a giant slug.

The expression upon her face was supported by the speech made the moment the two visitors were gone.

"What a very disagreeable young man that was," remarked Mrs. Sisley. "Mr. Ramsden. I hope *he* won't come often to see us!"

"Oh, he's all right," lazily answered Adeline. "When you know him."

"So talkative. My dear, he might have drowned you!"

"But he didn't."

"I didn't say he did. He *might* have. Thanks to Marcus, he didn't. . . ." She spoke with pride. "Marcus is *much* the superior young man. He's so polite."

"He's rather *shy*," objected Ruth. "He never speaks to me if he can help it."

"Ah, to *you*," replied her mother, with a lofty smile. "It's different with me. He feels I have a mother's heart—a mother's understanding. This evening he has asked permission to make a drawing of me."

Ruth, discouraged, thought: "He didn't even ask my permission."

Adeline was sitting looking at them both with a demure smile.

"You're a comic pair," she observed cryptically, and popped a chestnut into her mouth.

IX.

MARCUS came again to see the Sisleys a few nights later, and sat for an hour, hardly speaking. When he said anything at all, his remark was invariably addressed to Adeline. Mrs. Sisley looked on approvingly. She told him stories of Adeline's babyhood. She followed with stories of her husband, of herself, of Adeline as a girl. She showed him needlework done by Ruth at school, and said that it had been done by Adeline.

Ruth, convulsed with laughter that was almost hysterical, escaped to the bedroom; and when she had laughed silently for a moment found to her horror that her eyes were wet.

"Good gracious!" she cried, in consternation. "I do hope I'm not going to be *silly*!"

Silly she was! It was by force that she made herself return to the sitting-room, where Mrs. Sisley was still engaged in reminiscence. Marcus sat listening, with his head low. Presently he rose and went away.

He did not return, this time, until a fortnight had passed; and in that fortnight Ruth had a thousand chills and exhilarations at thought of him. She remembered him in the middle of her work, and as she travelled in rattling trains, and ate her lunch in crowded tea-rooms. She remembered him as her eyes closed at night, and as they opened in the morning.

"I'm mad!" she told herself. "I shall . . . Of course I shall like him as a brother-in-law!"

For at this time Adeline was much out at parties, at picnics, and other sports; and

when she returned home after each of these Mrs. Sisley always questioned her, to learn whether Marcus had been of the party. It appeared that he frequently had been one of those present.

"Why doesn't he come and see us?" Mrs. Sisley demanded.

"He's awfully busy," Adeline said.

Ruth's heart sank.

Mrs. Sisley would often, as

"But perhaps, mother," said Ruth, "he may want to marry an artist, and not a little gad-about like Adeline."

"My dear! Marriages between artists are seldom happy. Besides, you have only to notice how eagerly he listens when I speak of Adeline."

"Sometimes he smiles, mother. Sometimes I wish you wouldn't speak so much of her. It's a little . . ."

"You can't appreciate him as I do, Ruth. A mother knows. She is so wise



"'Quite all right!' he declared, reassuringly, to Mrs. Sisley. 'J-just as you are. . . . That's right. The eyes away. . . . So!'"

they sat together, speak to Ruth of Marcus.

"He's such a splendid young man," she said one evening, when they were alone. "So fine and tall. So courteous. He will make her a good husband. I hear that portrait painters, when they are popular, as Marcus is bound to be, earn very large sums of money."

in all such matters. She reads the most difficult signs. . . ."

"Can she read her daughter also?" asked Ruth, who was a little puzzled by Adeline.

"Like a book, dear. Adeline shows as clearly as he does that, although she hardly dares to look at her own heart, she is slipping

. . . slipping deeply into love with him. As he is with her. It makes me so happy to see the growth of their love."

"I don't see it myself!" cried Ruth desperately.

Mrs. Sisley smiled.

her bed and kicked off her shoes as an excited child might have done. Ruth could have imagined that Adeline's cheeks were flushed and her eyes sparkling.

So greatly did the staring light affect her that Ruth tried to go to sleep again. She



"And with that he pushed gently towards Ruth a piece of the paper he had torn . . . the paper came nearer still, until she was forced to cast her eyes upon it. There was no drawing. There were written words."

"Wait!" she advised. "See them with my eyes."

"I hope Adeline will be happy," answered Ruth, almost breathless.

X.

THAT night she had a terrible shock. She had gone early to bed; and she had been sleeping so uneasily that the return, about midnight, of Adeline awakened her. Blinking drowsily in the bright light of the bedroom, she was aware of Adeline's quick movements. It seemed to Ruth that there was a suppressed excitement about Adeline's manner. She went to and fro, examined herself in the mirror, sat upon the edge of

could not tell whether she had been successful, whether she was dreaming, or whether she actually saw what next appeared to happen. Some little time passed, as if there had been an interval in her consciousness. Then she felt tremendously wakeful, opened her eyes again, saw Adeline, in her night-dress, go to the dressing-table, take from it something small and black, go back to her bed, pull back the coverlet, jump into bed, and sit upright.

From the small, black object Adeline apparently took something still smaller, which caught the light, and flashed. She pored upon it. She looked about the room. She set the sparkling thing upon a finger,

a finger of her left hand, and held her hand up so that the light made brilliant sparks come from the thing which was set upon the finger. At the same time Adeline gave a low laugh, pressed her finger to her lips, jumped out of bed again and extinguished the light.

Ruth heard a sigh. It was a long sigh, she knew, of happiness. With horror at her heart, she lay quite still in the darkness, struggling to check a groan of anguish. Too well did she read the truth. The ring was Marcus's ring. Ruth knew despair.

XI.

SHE understood little of her work the next day. It was fortunately so much a matter of routine that she was able to do it mechanically. Dully, she set down the symbols which stood for Mr. Scruter's words. Dully she typed out those words, stumbling and erasing with clumsiness quite unfamiliar to her. Marcus . . . Marcus . . .

"I'm in love with him," she thought. "What agony! To see him constantly and in love with Adeline . . . marrying her . . . taking her away. . . . I shall never be able to bear it. I *must* bear it. I must be exactly as usual, as if nothing had happened. When they tell me, I must seem surprised and pleased. With my heart breaking."

She stared straight in front of her. Slowly her head was bent down, lower, lower, and her eyes closed. Her hands were clenched.

XII.

ADELINE had already been home and had gone out again by the time Ruth reached home that night; and for this respite at least Ruth was thankful. She watched her mother for a few moments, until she gathered from Mrs. Sisley's calmness that she had been told nothing at all. This, too, was a relief. Anything was a relief which gave Ruth time to recover her self-control. If her mother did not yet know, and if Adeline would but stay out, they might still have an evening's quiet, and Ruth might do much towards achieving the calm which was so essential.

An hour passed.

"Where has Adeline gone, mother?" asked Ruth, in a stifled voice.

For answer, Mrs. Sisley shook her head.

"She only said she wouldn't be late. She was in a hurry. I think she had to meet somebody. I couldn't help thinking . . ." Mrs. Sisley smiled archly. "I couldn't help thinking—feeling sure who it was. . . . Marcus, of course. Who else? She was so excited. I've never seen her more charming.

I hoped *he* was to see her like that. . . . Was there a ring? She's come back . . ."

Ruth's heart began to race.

"No," she said, choking. "It's somebody at the door. Not Adeline."

She rose and moved forward, her heart thumping in her breast.

It was Marcus who stood without.

XIII.

"Oh, Marcus!" cried Ruth. Then: "But Adeline's gone out. You've missed her." Her voice seemed to wail. She could hardly restrain her tears.

"How unfortunate!" answered Marcus. He stepped inside the front door. "But . . . but m-may I still come in?" He seemed to be laughing. Was he not, then, disappointed? Had he known? Of course! Of course, he too was excited. As excited as Adeline. He had come to tell them. . . . Adeline must be below. . . . Or, was there . . . ? Ruth felt that her cheeks had grown hot as fire. She saw her mother at the inner door.

"Is Addie not with you?" asked Mrs. Sisley. "How strange. Where can she be? Come in, Marcus. We quite thought . . . Dear Addie didn't say . . ."

"I w-wanted . . . I w-wanted," stammered Marcus. He was confused. He could not say what he had it in mind to say. His own cheeks were redder than was customary. He stood awkwardly in the room, with a large drawing-book under his arm, and looked helplessly at the two of them.

"We haven't seen you for so long," murmured Ruth.

He looked at her. He looked straight into her eyes; and turned abruptly away. Ruth turned also, miserably, and sat down by the table.

"I w-wanted," repeated Marcus, "to make that sketch of you, Mrs. Sisley. You . . . you remember?"

"Oh, dear me!" she cried. "How delightful! I thought . . . I was afraid . . ."

"I've been so busy. . . ."

"You've been going to parties, Marcus!" cried Ruth reproachfully.

"Not one, I assure you!" he answered. "Not a single party."

Not? But Adeline had said . . . It was a flash of thought, gone in an instant.

"Where shall I sit? Will the light matter? It distorts, I'm afraid." Mrs. Sisley was in a flutter. Already, she was

drawing her face into an expression of set agreeableness.

"Exactly as you were, M-Mrs. Sisley. . . ." Marcus's manner was quite different. He was less shy than he had ever been. He spoke with assurance. "There. . . ."

Ruth picked up a book. Mrs. Sisley sat in her arm-chair by the fireplace, staring fixedly at a little bowl of flowers which stood upon the corner of the mantelpiece. Marcus took a chair at the centre table, within two feet of Ruth. He drew out his pencils, set them there beside him, jumped up, took a good look at his model, sat down again.

"Turn a li-little farther away, if you please, Mrs. Sisley," he said urgently.

Mrs. Sisley had been peeping out of the corner of her eye.

Ruth could hardly breathe. She stared at her book. She must keep very still, so as not to distract him; and she must quieten the hurried beating of her heart, lest he should read the terrible embarrassment into which she had been thrown by her thoughts and his nearness. She bent lower, hearing only the soft brushing of his pencil upon the rough paper of his drawing-book.

Once or twice Mrs. Sisley sighed. She moved or twitched a little, as elderly ladies (and children) are apt to do when they try to sit still. And whenever she did this Ruth knew that Marcus frowned. She had a glimpse of him in a new mood—intent, busy, quite without hesitation. She knew that here, at any rate, all his movements were certain, confident. And at this new, treasurable picture, which would be so dear a memory, Ruth unconsciously sighed also, as if in sympathy with her mother.

Startlingly, Marcus seemed to tear out a page of his book.

"Quite all right!" he declared, reassuringly, to Mrs. Sisley. "J-just as you are. . . . That's right. The eyes away. . . . So!"

And with that he pushed gently towards Ruth a piece of the paper he had torn. She did not suppose that this was done for her attention; but the paper came nearer still, until she was forced to cast her eyes upon it. There was no drawing. There were written words.

"Don't you ever go out?" she read upon the paper. "I've been trying to catch you each evening. I've got something to tell you."

This! Marcus! Ruth's heart seemed to be in her throat. Then, the absurdity of it struck her; and though the throbbing

weight behind her eyes continued, she could hardly restrain a little cry of laughter which rose to her lips. With a glance at his solemn, droll, intent face as he proceeded with his fresh sketch, she smiled, and stole a pencil.

"Mother is nervous at night," she wrote. "What have you got to tell me?"

She saw his frown as he read her answer. From the tail of her eye she saw the composition of his next message. It took him a considerable time during which he frequently looked at his model, and made a stroke or two upon his sketch.

"I never get a chance to speak to you," were the grumbling words Ruth read. "Don't you think I deserve something better?"

This to herself? But what of Adeline? What of that sparkling ring?

Her reply, tremblingly written, was:

"Haven't you got all you want?"

For a long time there was no further correspondence. The drawing proceeded with doggedness. At last, as if in desperation, Marcus dashed down a few words. He thrust the paper at her, and, almost scowling, pursued his task. Ruth saw that his face was deeply crimsoned. She read what he had written. Her heart stood still. The blood rushed to her cheeks. For the blunt words were:

"I want *you*. Nothing else. I'm in love with you. For God's sake put me out of my misery."

Ruth sat perfectly still. The colour faded from her cheeks, which became as pale as death. Her lips trembled. She read the words over and over again. For a moment or two she was unable to compose her answer. She heard a clock ticking, and saw her mother give a weary jerk; but she did not notice these things. She was in a dream.

At last, taking the pencil again into her fingers, she gave Marcus his answer.

"I love you," she wrote. That was all. And as she returned the paper to him she felt her hand clasped firmly in his. He had stooped. Her fingers were pressed to his lips, to his heart.

"Thank God!" he ejaculated aloud.

"I beg pardon?" asked Mrs. Sisley.

"Keep just as you are!" cried Marcus. "We're getting along famously!"

XIV.

THE sketch was finished. The subject of it looked upon the evening's work with pride and pleasure.

"Dear Adeline will be so delighted," said Mrs. Sisley.

"This . . . this is the b-best evening's work I've ever done," Marcus assured her.

"It's very *like*," said Mrs. Sisley.

"I . . . I shall come and m-make another one of you," answered Marcus, edging towards the door. "G-good night, Mrs. Sisley."

"So sorry, Adeline . . ."

"Not at all. Not at all."

He forcibly closed the sitting-room door behind him, and Ruth was in his arms in the darkness of the little hall. She felt the roughness of his tweed jacket, the vigour of his embrace, the pressure of his eager lips upon her own. Trembling, blushing, but beyond comparison happy, Ruth raised her arms and drew his cheek against her own. In quick whispers they spoke together—little half-completed sentences.

"Never get you alone," he grumbled. "It's been unbearable."

"You're so shy. . . . My dear!"

"T-terrified. L-love you. . . ."

It was enough. Both were beautifully happy.

XV.

"WHY, Ruth . . ."

Mrs. Sisley opened the door suddenly;

the light of the sitting-room streamed out upon the two of them and Marcus still held Ruth closely to his breast. There was a terrible pause—an accusing pause upon the one side, a guilty, freeing pause upon the other.

"I . . . I'm just g-going," stammered Marcus guiltily. "I . . . I've been asking Ruth to m-marry me. . . ."

The effect of his declaration was overwhelming.

"Ruth!" almost screamed Mrs. Sisley.

"Ruth! O-oh!" It was a cry of horror.

"My poor Adeline!" She seemed about to swoon. "My poor child!"

Hastily, they succoured her as she sank limply into their arms.

"Unless-less I'm mistaken," grinned Marcus, very consolingly, "she'll marry the man who wants her. Aubrey . . ."

"Aubrey!" moaned Mrs. Sisley. "That man! Never!"

"I . . . I think it's all settled. I . . . I *think* so. N-not a bad chap," said Marcus. "Not m-many brains; but . . ."—he lowered his voice to a whisper—"his father's a m-millionaire. . . ."

Then, again kissing Ruth—this time unashamedly before her mother—he ran down the stairs, leaving them both dazed and wonder-stricken.



MY LAST DESIRE.

WHEN evening comes and I sit all alone,
Then am I least my own;

A thousand dreams come thronging through the hours,
A thousand powers.

They knock: but when I open nought is there
But cold and moonlit air;
One night I will run swift to open wide:
Then one shall bide.

One!—and the night shall clash her stars to see
My captive sit with me;
And I shall face, beside my dying fire,
My last desire!

WALLACE B. NICHOLS.

AESOP'S FABLE

By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "Berry and Co.," "Jonah and Co.," "And Five Were Foolish," "Blind Corner," "The Stolen March," "Valerie French," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LINDSAY CABLE

WILLIAM RED SPENSER lived by his pen.

Neither of his grandfathers would have approved this calling, but theirs were the days of rent-rolls and fortunes invested in 'the funds,' and, since old orders change and the devil drives high and low, the son of fifty squires lived by his pen.

Had he cared to live in a city, to write more quickly, to study the public taste, he could have made more than he did: but the Red Spensers had never been townsmen, and the love of the countryside was in his blood. More. He came of a line of landlords that loved their land. An acre of his own, in the midst of which he could live, meant more to Spenser than ten times its worth in shares: and, since in post-war England such a life was beyond his means, he had bought a tiny estate in the foot-hills of the Pyrenees.

When his freehold had been paid for, his old English furniture installed and a pocket bed-chamber made into a decent bathroom, the owner of the old white-walled home-stead had found himself poor indeed. Happily, however, he had a market for his work, and, before six months were over, he was abreast of his outlay and able to pay his way.

And now two years had gone by, and William Red Spenser, recluse, was doing well. The old house was in order, the little property flourished, the massive coach-house sheltered a serviceable car. The friends who declared that he was wasting his life paid him flying visits and went away less sure. There was a stable peacefulness about Piétat which was not of their world. The place and its pleasant master stuck in their minds, rose up before them like a proverb the comfortable wisdom of which is not to be denied.

Belinda Pomeroy, popularly supposed to

get the most out of life, made no bones of her approbation.

"Rufus knows how to live. I get more satisfaction out of a day at Piétat than out of Ascot itself. Why? Because I get down to Nature. We're all on the wrong tack—Gadarene swine, if you like, rushing into the sea. But Rufus sees further. He sits right down in his castle and watches the crowd go by. He lives as men and women were meant to live. But he ought to marry."

"He can't take a wife," said her husband, "out of the Gadarene swine. That would be a *mésalliance*."

"There must be others," said Belinda.

"There are. But they wouldn't suit Rufus. He buries himself alive, but he doesn't go rough."

This was most true.

When Spenser emerged from his kingdom, he might have stepped out of his Club. Beyond a certain gravity of manner, solitude and simplicity left no mark upon the man. A handsome villa at Biarritz brought the Pomeroy's thither twice in the year. When Spenser visited them, his clothes were faultless and his address was superb. As he danced at the Casino, nobody would have dreamed that his heart was in a fold of the foot-hills forty miles off.

"We're not Gadarene swine," said Belinda. "We may be Gadarenes, and I admit that we rush: but we don't rush quite so violently as the—the—as some do."

"True," said her husband, holding his glass to the light. "But, even so, can you reclaim a Gadarene? I can't see you dwelling at Piétat, brushing the sheep before breakfast and turning out after dinner to gather the slugs."

"I should love it," said Belinda. "Let's go to Biarritz next week."

"What, an' miss Goodwood?"

Mrs. Pomeroy hesitated. The raiment she had chosen for Goodwood was very fine.

"Of course," she said, "I'm afraid I'm in over the knees. Before we married, I had begun to rush. And now. . ."

Her husband drained his glass, rose to his feet and picked her up in his arms.

"I'm a born Gadarene," he said, "and I married the best of my kind. But for you, I should have been a Gadarene swine. And there you are. Rufus commands our admiration, but then and there we get off. And so, I'm afraid, my beauty, will everyone else. But I shouldn't trouble your head. Rufus is very happy and thinks far too much of my wife to look twice at another girl."

Belinda kissed him. Then she sighed contentedly.

"At least," she said, "he's only just twenty-nine. And we can always hope."

She could not know that at that very moment William Red Spenser was trying not to despair.

The man was standing in his courtyard, by the side of his well, frowning upon a fine cord, of which twenty inches were wet. Water.

Piétat had but one well, and now, before the great drought, its springs were beginning to fail. . . .

Spenser lifted his head and looked at the sky.

This was mercilessly blue: where the earth rose up to meet it, outline was blurred: distance was dancing, and the sun swagged in the heaven, a heavy-handed monarch of all he surveyed.

Spenser looked again at the cord.

Less than two feet of water, instead of the normal six. There had always been six—always, no matter how much you drew. And this was July. Once the spring began failing, it would not rise again till the end of the year. If the drought were to end to-morrow, twenty inches of water would have to meet Piétat's needs for the next four months. Well, that would do—well enough. But, if the drought did not break, in another month the well would be dry as a bone. And then . . .

Spenser thought of his garden, his house, his handful of sheep; of the borders he had created, the turf he had slaved at, the bath-room he had installed. The nearest stream was three miles from where he stood. To have water brought thence would cost a little fortune: as like as not, no one would

undertake to bring it so far: such water-carts as there were would be serving less distant farms.

It was a heart-breaking business.

Sitting in his study that evening, correcting some proofs, the man found his mind straying back to the Spanish well-digger's words.

"I cannot deepen this well, sir, for you are down to the rock. If one can go deep enough, one will come to another *couche d'eau*. That is abundant and will never give out. I have found it at Belet, seventeen miles from here. And I will dig a new well whenever you please. *But I must be told where to dig.*"

When Spenser had spoken of diviners, the Spaniard had thrown up his hands.

"I know of three, sir, and I cannot recommend one. If I knew a good water-finder, I should never be out of work. But a failure is bad for me, too. It is about in a moment—in everyone's mouth. And no wells are dug for a twelvemonth, and I must go into the towns and dig their drains for my bread."

Before he went to his bed, Spenser walked in his garden and wondered what he had done.

His little home seemed like to be broken up. If the rain did not come, Piétat would have to be abandoned for three or four months. The house would have to be shut, the garden let go: the sheep would have to be sold, the servants dismissed. He would have to lodge himself somewhere, so that his work might go on. And, when December was in, he would start again—with a new, unspeakable curse hanging over his head.

There was no blinking the truth: the tenure he had thought so stable was depending upon the grin of a heathenish god. His first summer he had used little water: his second had been curiously wet: and this was his third. . . .

The night was lovely. The perfect sky was sown with a million stars. There was no moon, but Spenser's practised eye could tell the points of the plot he loved so well—the whispering beechwood and the slope of the pasture beyond, the file of veteran poplars lining the road, the sweet-smelling avenue of limes. The house they kept lay, like a slumbering sovereign, amid its life-guard of oaks: the spire of its single turret attested the fairy-tale. The light from the study windows laid two dim paths upon the lawn: and owls were crying, and the

exquisite scent of jasmin laded the cool night air.

These things were Spenser's fortune—his goose of the golden egg. And to-night he had no pleasure in them. . . .

Water. Without water you could not go on.

DEAR RUFUS,

We are here. Please come over on Tuesday and stay for at least two nights. We have a table for the opening of The Superbe. A thousand Gadarenes will be there, so come and rush down a steep place for once in a way.

Yours,

BELINDA.

The day Spenser left for Biarritz was very fine. There was not a cloud in the sky: what little wind there was sat in the East: and there were six inches of water in Piétat's well.

* * *

Miss Lettice Longwood was as bored as she looked.

She had been led to believe that the opening night of *The Superbe* would be worth attending. She would have attended it any way, but she had been misled. It was exactly the same as any other night anywhere else. The band was coloured and played the same tunes. The food was fairly good and worth about a tenth of its price. She had received the same favours in Boston six months before. The floor was far too crowded,

and her dress was the best in the place. When she danced, all eyes were upon her: when she passed between the tables, conversation died down. Everything was exactly the same.

She had been 'the Longwood girl' for nearly five years. For the last three, certainly, she had carried all before her,



"The girl stood still, trembling. 'This is the place. Will you peg it? Between my feet.'"

A month of anxiety dragged by. The drought broke, and for three days the rain came down. Then the sun reascended his throne, like a giant refreshed. By the tenth day of August water was being sold.

Then came a note from Belinda, forty miles off.

wherever she went. It had never been very amusing, and now she was very bored.

She danced again listlessly. Very soon she would go home, or, perhaps, 'on somewhere'. It was only just three.

The music ended with a crash, and she found herself next to Belinda, whom she had met in Town.

"Good morning," said Mrs. Pomeroy. "I thought I had the best dress, but I see I was wrong."

"Thank you very much," said Miss Longwood. "May I come and see you one day?"

"Come to lunch on Friday, will you? Let me introduce Mr. Spenser—Miss Longwood. He's a hermit and a writer of books."

"He doesn't look either," said Miss Longwood. "But that, I believe, is the mode."

As a matter of form, Spenser asked for a dance.

The lady inclined her head.

"Shall we say the one after next?"

"If you please," said William Red Spenser.

As Belinda resumed her seat—

"I've introduced you," she said, "to 'the Longwood girl'. Don't fall in love with her, Rufus, because it's no go."

"I shouldn't think of doing such a thing," said Spenser. "She's undeniably lovely, but—well, I don't think I've ever seen apathy so pronounced."

"A Gadarene," said Ivan. "But she's rushed down so many steep places that now nothing short of a precipice shakes her up."

"That's so much surmise," said Belinda. "I imagine her life's been so easy that now at twenty-three she's got nothing left."

Both these conclusions were right—so far as they went. Lettice Longwood had been born with a golden spoon in her mouth: she would have been happy, had she been born beside a hedgerow. Her quality was her eagerness, and this had never been served. The world into which she was brought had always been at her feet. Her strongly desirous nature had never had anything to desire: her instinctive efforts to find the food it needed had exhausted all the resources of Vanity Fair.

Most women disliked her, as was natural: most men liked her very much. It was 'like' or 'dislike' always. You could not be indifferent to 'the Longwood girl'. The indifference was all on her side. She neither liked nor disliked: she did not care. Men fell in love with her beauty, but not with her mind. She never admitted

them to that. Few tried to force an entry—she had the reputation of being unusually wise. Such as did try were lazily cross-examined and contemptuously dismissed. Occasionally a fool would believe that he had found favour in her eyes: his fall was invariably great. Lettice Longwood was a very hard case. . . .

When Spenser came for his dance, he entered the field of observation and was curiously observed. People saw a tall well-built man, with the colour of health in his face, and hair that every woman would like to possess: a man with a pleasant manner, though something grave, with wide-set, steady grey eyes, a firm but kindly mouth and a resolute chin. They imagined, no doubt, that he was suppressing his pride. As a matter of fact, he was thinking of Piétat.

For a little the two danced in silence.

Then—

"You're a Red Spenser," said the girl.

The man inclined his head.

"How did you know?"

"By your hair," said Miss Longwood.

"My grandfather once went to Daybreak, and he used to tell me of the portraits all with the same red-gold hair."

"That's right," said Spenser. "Daybreak has gone now, but I've six of the portraits here."

"Where?"

"At the hermitage, forty miles off."

He told her of the fold in the foot-hills, where he had made his home.

"A miniature Daybreak," said Miss Longwood.

The man coloured with pleasure.

"That was the childish idea."

"I think it's a very good game. Why do you say 'was'?"

With a heavy heart, Spenser related the truth.

'The Longwood girl' heard him out.

As the music stopped—

"I can find water," she said. "I have the power."

Spenser could only stare.

"My grandfather wanted water, and he sent for a man. I was twelve or thirteen, and I watched him at work. When he'd done, he gave me the rod—as a toy to a child. To his surprise, it turned for me more than for him. For the rest of the summer it was my favourite game—finding water and learning to judge its depth. Then I left the country, and I've never been back."

The quiet, confident tone compelled belief.

William Red Spenser could hardly control his voice.

"I hardly dare ask you, but will you be so generous as to lend me your skill? I mean, there may be no water. I know that perfectly well. But, if there is . . ."

Miss Longwood stifled a yawn.

"If you'll call for me at two to-morrow, I'll do what I can."

"You're awfully kind," said Spenser. He hesitated. Then, "I'm afraid my car's not very comfortable," he said.

"I expect it holds two," said Miss Longwood. "Good night."

* * * * *

Some twelve hours later the serviceable car came to rest under the shadow of the Piétat oaks.

Miss Longwood alighted stiffly, to be received by a rout of Spaniel puppies, whose affection outran respect.

Before Spenser could come to her rescue, she had two of them in her arms.

"Hermits aren't allowed dogs," she said, "or places like this."

"They'll make you all dirty," said Spenser.

"I don't care at all. May I take them into the house?"

"Of course."

He led the way to the study and told his man to bring tea.

To the delight of the puppies, Miss Longwood sat down on the floor. From the arm of a chair Spenser admired his guest.

After a moment she lifted a glowing face.

"Don't think I've forgotten the water, but I haven't been childish for years."

"I'd forgotten it," said Spenser, "for the first time for more than a month."

"Then I've done some good," said Miss Longwood. "How beautifully cool it is here."

"They knew how to build," said Spenser. "Piétat's walls are nearly four feet thick."

"Who's 'they'? The gnomes? The brownies? I'm sure they drew the plan." She got to her feet. "And now please show me the pictures my grandfather saw."

He led her into the pannelled dining-room.

Miss Longwood studied the portraits one by one.

At length—

"How well they go here," she said. "I think they must feel at home."

"You couldn't have said a thing which would please me more."

"It's true," said the girl. "I don't know who thought of this house, but it's like some wood-cut I've seen—some tail-piece in an old book."

They passed out into the garden, and he showed her the lie of his land.

Then Frodsham came out to tell them that tea was served.

As they strolled the lawn in his wake, Miss Longwood hung on her heel and surveyed the house.

Presently she nodded.

"We must find that water," she said. "You can't leave this."

As was to be expected, her downright appreciation took Spenser by storm. Her apathy was forgotten, her reputation became a myth. Her swift understanding, her fellowship carried the man off his feet. Her notable charm overwhelmed him. It only remained for her beauty to deal him the *coup de grâce*.

Sitting by her side in his study, her host could find no fault in her, body or soul.

The setting suited her well: her natural dignity went with the sober room: her soft voice enriched its quiet: the William-and-Mary settee might have been made for her pose. Her firm, slim hands used the aged silver with infinite grace. Her little hat lay beside her, and her fine, raven hair gave back the light: her eyes were grey and fearless, and there was pride in her mouth: her cherry-coloured dress was perfect as the figure it served.

Before her cigarette was finished, Miss Longwood rose to her feet.

"Have you a rod for me?" she said.

There were hazel twigs in the car. Spenser had cut them that morning at eight o'clock. He brought them at once.

"They'll do," said my lady. "I think I like that one best. Will you cut it down a little? It's rather too big."

When he had shaped it to her liking, it resembled the letter Y, twelve inches by eight.

"Now may I see the old well?"

He led her round to the courtyard and watched her compass the well.

The rod never moved.

"I don't wonder you're short of water: there's next to none here. I—I can't even feel the spring. . . . Yes. Wait a minute. . . . Here it is. But it's very slight. And now for the depth. . . . Don't tell

me. I should say it was thirty feet down. Perhaps twenty-nine."

"Well done indeed," said Spenser. "It's twenty-eight."

Miss Longwood took a deep breath.

"For one dreadful moment I thought I had lost the knack. What would you have said, if I had?"

"I should have tried to thank you for coming at all."

"I don't quite see why," said Miss Longwood. "I'm enjoying myself very much." She took a step back and looked round—at the well and the oaks and the gable and the slope of the meadow beyond. "But I wish I could place your home. I've seen it before somewhere. It's all so simple that it's immensely rich."

As though to applaud this sentiment, a splendid rooster, exultant upon an old mounting-block, crowed lustily.

The two laughed naturally.

"He's right in the picture," said Miss Longwood. "And now to business."

They began to pass round the property, keeping close to its verge, the girl going first and Spenser stepping behind, with his eyes on her back. . . .

Three times the rod declared water, but its signals were very faint. With the greatest care Miss Longwood explored the clues, and each time, after a little, she shook her fair head.

With a sinking heart, Spenser followed her round to their starting-point. . . .

One by one she searched the meadows, across and across: she scoured the beech-wood and she compassed the house: she proved the lawn and the flower-garden—even the drive, in vain. In desperation she entered and walked the rooms, but without avail. There was no water.

She asked for another rod and started again.

Slowly and with infinite patience she covered the ground she had covered an hour before. When Spenser begged her to stop, she waved him away. It might have been her home she was striving to save.

At half-past six o'clock they stood again upon the lawn.

"Please come in," said Spenser. "You must be ready to drop. I can never thank you enough for—"

"If you talk like that," said the girl, "I shall begin to cry. I came to help you to live here. All I've done so far is to make it plain that you can't. But I'm not through yet. I found water down there, didn't I?"

She pointed to the poplars fringing the road below. "Well, how did it get there? Downhill. It comes from above. Very well. I'm going to try once more at the back of the house."

Together they climbed the orchard which presently slanted steeply to a little stone wall. This was Piétat's boundary. Beyond lay the rough of a meadow, scrambling up to a bluff.

The girl stared at the wall. Then she turned and looked at the house, and, below, the row of poplars and the sheep cropping the shadows they threw on the turf. Presently she returned to the wall and the meadow and the brown bluff beyond.

"Will you help me over?" she said.

Spenser mounted the wall, lifted her up, very gently and set her down on her feet on the further side.

As he leaped down beside her—

"You're very strong," said the girl.

Then she glanced about her, took fresh hold of her rod and walked for the bluff.

Almost at once the rod began to move.

Another three steps and it was bending. It was plainly all she could do to hold the fork of it straight. Spenser watched it, as a man in a dream. The tail of the Y, which had been pointing upwards, was pointing outwards and down . . . actually down.

Very slowly its mistress was turning towards the right: her delicate wrists were quivering under the strain: without looking at Spenser, she spoke.

"Please come and take off my hat."

This was tight-fitting and resisted: Spenser drew it off with the utmost care.

Miss Longwood shook back her curls and continued to move.

The rod relaxed slightly, and she bore to the left. As she did so, it dipped sharply. Another two steps, and, before Spenser's eyes, it assumed the form of a hook.

The girl stood still, trembling.

"This is the place. Will you peg it? Between my feet."

The man went down on his knees and pressed a peg into the ground.

Miss Longwood shut her eyes and lifted her chin.

For a moment she stood swaying.

Then—

"Forty-two feet, I should say. Perhaps forty-three. D'you think they'll sell you this land?"

"Yes," said Spenser shakily.

"Good," said the girl.

Then she put a hand to her head and fainted.

Spenser caught her as she fell, and carried her into the shade. She came to her senses, before he had laid her down. For a moment their eyes met. As she closed hers again, the colour came into her cheeks.

"Stupid of me," she murmured. "Don't go. Let me lie quiet for a moment, and then we'll go back to the house."

Not knowing what else to do, Spenser sat down by her side and stared at the tops of the oaks, showing over the wall.

So for, perhaps, two minutes.

Then—

"I know," said the girl. "I remember. It's straight out of Aesop's Fables, this pretty place. The rooster and the well and the puppies and the cool of the little old house—they all fit in. And I'm sure the old pictures talk when they're left alone."

"They'll have something to say to-night," said William Red Spenser.

* * * * *

Miss Longwood, completely restored, sat back in her chair.

"I shan't rest till you've bought it," she said. "When will you know?"

"To-morrow morning," said Spenser. "I'll send you a wire."

"And when can you start digging?"

"The moment it's mine."

"May I come and watch?"

The man got to his feet and stepped to the open window commanding the lawn. For a moment he stood, looking out: then he turned to the lady adorning his room.

"I'm afraid I've been very silent," he said quietly. "The truth is I'm rather tongue-tied. You've tied up my tongue. Our lives are so very different, and the gulf between us is so wide. You're 'the Longwood girl'. Why should the life I was living have mattered to you? It didn't, it doesn't, it can't—it's out of Miss Longwood's ken. Yet you've taken infinite trouble to save it for me. And now you actually ask if you can come and look at—
at—"

"At Aesop's Fable," said Miss Longwood, swinging an exquisite leg. "May I?"

"Oh, my dear," said Spenser, "what do you think?"

"That's better," said Miss Longwood, laughing. "And please don't talk about gulfs. We're two of a kind, aren't we? Even if you live in a fable, and I in an ultra-film?"

Spenser's impulse was to kiss her smart little foot. Instead—

"I wish," he said, "that I had a painting of you. Just as you are, sitting back, with a light in your eyes and your hands in your lap."

"To go with the others?" flashed Miss Longwood. "What about 'The Daw and the Peacocks'?"

"To go with the others," said Spenser. "It's time the Frogs had a queen."

With a maddening smile, the lady regarded her watch.

"I hate to say it," she said, "but in ten minutes' time I must go. Are you coming to Biarritz again?"

"I hadn't meant to, after I'd taken you back. But——"

"Then don't. I'll come. I promise. But I like you best here. Aesop belongs to his fable."

"That's the difference between us," said Spenser. "I belong to my fable, but Lettice Longwood belongs wherever she goes."

The girl shook her head.

"I don't think I belong anywhere," she said.

"You'll always belong here," said Spenser quietly.

"The freedom of Piétat. In return for——"

"In return for nothing," said Spenser. "Neither Piétat nor I can ever make any return. We shouldn't think of trying. You just belong to it—that's all. That's why I'd like your picture to hang with the other six. And now, if you'll let me, I'd like to cut you some flowers."

"May I come too, Aesop?"

"Certainly not," said Spenser. "You've walked far too far, as it is. If I had my way, you'd put up your little feet."

"I will—on the lawn. I want to watch—the sun going down."

"As my lady pleases," said Spenser.

Half an hour floated away, before she had done with the garden and had bade the puppies 'Good-bye'.

"Which one would you like?" said Spenser, as Frodsham gathered them in. "I'll house-train him before you leave Biarritz, and then you can take him away."

"Oh, Aesop, I'd love to have one. I'll call him 'Tail-piece'." She pointed a delicate finger. "I think that one likes me best."

"He's yours," said Spenser.

Then he let in the clutch.

Their way lay by by-roads, and the two

had sundown to themselves. The country was full of magic: Harlequin's sword was out. This comfortable stream ran crimson: that line of hanging woodland was turned to gold: the mountains became a miracle of rose-red stone.

As they slipped into Biarritz, Spenser switched on his lights.

At the famous hotel the porters and pages were waiting to usher her in.

"I'm afraid you're very late," said Spenser, with his hat in his hand.

"What for? My film? You're going to be later still. Won't you come in and have something?"

The man shook his head.

"Thank you very much, but —"

"I hoped you'd say 'No', Aesop. Will you remember to wire?"

"How could I forget — anything? When will you come back?"

"I don't know. Very soon. Good-bye. I've had such a happy time."

The man bent over her hand. Then he looked into her eyes.

"D'you wonder that I'm tongue-tied?" he said.

* * * * *

Nearly three weeks had gone by.

The land had been bought and paid for, the new well was forty feet deep, Tail-piece had bitten a brother for disrespect, and Captain and Mrs. Pomeroy were deeply concerned.

"My dear," said Belinda to her husband, "it's the most dreadful thing that ever

happened. He's mad about her, and she's amusing herself. When she goes——"

"He'll have to come here," said Ivan. "We'll see him through."

"He'll have to go back some time. And



"'Has he found?' cried the girl. 'Oh, my dear, haven't you seen?' 'I—I wasn't looking,' said Miss Longwood."

Piétat without her will drive him out of his mind. I tell you, he's mad about her. When he heard her car coming, you should have seen the look in his eyes."

"Perhaps she's mad about him."

"I wish she were," said Belinda. "But she isn't. She's just friendly. And she has this extraordinary charm that makes her friendliness dazzling—knocks you out. I can't be angry with her, though she's doing this rotten thing. She's accustomed to adoration. If Rufus didn't adore her, she'd be amazed. She's behaving quite normally and perfectly well. So is Rufus. In loving her he's doing the natural thing.

The tragedy of it is—he isn't a Gadarene. He leads a life that matters immensely to him. The consequence is that her coming into that life is a terrific affair."

"The Queen of the Gadarenes goes into the hermit's cave?"

"And finds it great fun, while the hermit goes off the deep end. Exactly. Oh, my dear, whatever are we to do?"

"Stand by with the sponge," said Ivan. "We can't interfere. If Rufus is going to crash, he'll have to do it. And, when he's down, you must go and render first aid. Here and now I give you permission to stroke his hair."

"It won't do any good," said Belinda. "I shan't have the requisite touch."

Her husband inspected her fingers and then put them up to his lips.

"*Chacun à son goût*," he said.

The Pomeroy's concern was natural. Nobody likes to see a good friend go down. Yet, they need not have been so dismayed.

master, hoped she would remember them both. But that was all. Aesop must stick to his fable, and she to her film. If he had had money—not very much, but enough to let him wander through Vanity Fair—he might have lifted his eyes. As it was . . .

And so he 'went off the deep end', determined to swim. He could hardly have done anything else. Had he detested Miss Longwood, in view of what she had done he could scarcely have been 'out' when she came. Fate bowed him down the smooth path. He let himself go—well aware of the cliff to which he must come.

As for the lady, she shall speak for herself.

"You must have an ox," said Miss Longwood. "I'm sure he'd be very useful."

The two were climbing the orchard which led to the well.

"He could fetch his own food," said Spenser, "but I can't think of anything else."



"The two boys were lying prone, with their chins on the edge of the well. Below, their father was striving with all his might."

If Spenser had lost his heart, he had kept his head. The man was desperately in love, but he had counted the cost and was fully prepared to pay, when the moment came. He knew that 'the Longwood girl' was out of his reach. He knew that Piétat appealed to her, was sure she liked its

"I'm sure he'd be a good influence. The other animals would listen to what he said. And then you should have an ass, as a sort of foil. The ox could rebuke him."

"But not for indolence," said Spenser. "The trouble is I'm not in the picture myself. I should be a husbandman."

"You're near enough," said Miss Longwood. "Besides, Aesop wrote. But you will have some bees, won't you? Hullo, I believe they've found."

The Spanish youths at the well were speaking their father below. As the two came up to the wall, they pulled off their caps.

"My father can smell water," said the elder. "He has found a great stone and he says it must be beneath that."

"Lift me over," said the girl. "I want to be in at the death."

As once before, Spenser swung her over the wall. Then he stepped to the well and set his hands on the tripod which straddled the shaft.

"Very careful, my lady. Use my arm as a rail."

Miss Longwood did so, and the two peered into the depths.

Presently they made out the Spaniard and the flash of his pick.

"Where's the stone?" breathed the girl. "I can't make it out."

"Directly below us," said Spenser. "He's clearing the soil from around it, to set it free. Then he'll drive the pick under and prize it out."

It was impossible not to be excited.

The two boys were lying prone, with their chins on the edge of the well. Below, their father was striving with all his might. The fellow was stripped to the waist, and, despite the chill below, you could see the gleam of the sweat running over his back. The tackle on the tripod swung idle: the buckets must wait. For three weeks he had laboured for this moment, blindly obeying his orders, and doing his best to smother his unbelief.

Three pairs of eyes watched him, hung on each movement he made. The fourth was steadily regarding William Red Spenser.

The latter stood like a rock, but his heart was full. All along he had been mortally afraid that they would strike rock. The girl had said quite frankly that whether there was rock in the way she could not tell. And now the danger was past, and Piétat was saved. In another moment they would have reached the spring. Then again, his darling was there, with her hands on his arm. . . .

The Spaniard scraped back the earth and drove his pick under the stone. Then he put his whole weight on the helve. The watchers above saw it moving, saw the stone shift and turn. The Spaniard let

the pick go and plucked out the stone with his hands. Then he cast it down and leaned back against the wall.

In the form of the stone lay a winking puddle of light.

The Spaniard shook the sweat from his brow and called to his sons.

"Send down the bucket. This time tomorrow I shall be working in water up to my waist."

"Has he found?" cried the girl.

"Oh, my dear, haven't you seen?"

"I—I wasn't looking," said Miss Longwood.

As the bucket went swinging, the elder boy showed his white teeth.

"*Madame* may sleep soundly to-night. There is water in abundance. The pretty flowers of her garden will never want."

With her hands upon Spenser's arm, Miss Longwood smiled back.

"That's a great thought," she said gently. She turned to her squire. "Aesop, you must have been right. He thinks I belong to the fable."

Spenser stiffened. Then he looked at the boy.

"*Mademoiselle* is a great lady—a great princess. She honours me with her friendship, but she is not my wife."

The boy mumbled an apology. Then, with a scarlet face, he bent to the rope.

As they turned to the wall—

"Poor child," said Miss Longwood softly. "He'd never have seen me again."

Spenser stopped dead.

"Are you leaving Biarritz?"

"I must, Aesop. I ought to have gone last week, but I—I wanted so much to see the water come in."

"You've a very sweet nature," said Spenser. He swung himself on to the wall and handed her up. "I shall feel lost when you're gone."

"No one to lift over the wall?"

"That's right. May I lift you down?"

"Yes."

In silence they passed through the orchard and through the little courtyard. As they came to the lawn, Tail-piece emerged from the house, with a collar about his neck. For a moment he stood like an image: then he flung himself at his master with a whimper of joy.

Spenser picked him up in his arms and made much of the scrap.

"I can't take him," said Miss Longwood. "He—he loves you. And he'll never be so happy again."

"He's a very lucky fellow. I envy him very much."

"Aesop! You're not tired of your fable?"

"You belong to it," said Spenser quietly. "And now you're going away. It won't be the same."

"For heaven's sake—why?"

"Because—there's no one like you." He laughed shortly. "But I rather imagine you hear that once a week."

"They don't put it so simply," said Miss Longwood. "And then, again, you say it as though you thought it were true. But you mustn't believe it, Aesop. I'm only one of the stars in an ultra-film."

"I've seen you close up," said Spenser, "and—off parade. 'The Longwood girl' is a picture, but Lettice Longwood is a work of Nature herself."

Miss Longwood shaded her eyes and looked at the hills.

"Talking of pictures," she said, "I've been drawn. Etched. Tilsit is staying at Biarritz, so I asked him to try his hand."

"Tilsit? It must be lovely. He's got a wonderful touch."

"If you'd like to see it," said Miss Longwood, "it's in the car."

The well-found coupé was standing in the shade of the oaks. A large rectangular package was lying within the boot. Spenser withdrew it with the greatest possible care. The etching was glazed. An article of such virtue must be uncovered indoors: the dining-room table offered the most convenient site. . . .

Leaning against the dresser, Miss Longwood watched the brown fingers busy about the string.

As he threw back the paper, the man gave a cry of delight.

Tilsit might have worked in his study, and have etched his mistress as she sat back in his chair. The beautiful pose was the same, as was the dress, and, though the master had drawn but her head and shoulders, the head of the chair was behind them, as it had been that first day.

"You like it?"

"It's perfect," cried Spenser. "It's you. What ever will everyone say? It's you, as you are. It isn't 'the Longwood girl'."

"No one will see it," said Miss Longwood. "That's the only copy, and I have the plate. I—I had it done for you, Aesop."

"Lettice!"

"You say things as if you mean them, and you said you'd like my picture to hang

up in here. And I should be . . . very honoured. And, when people come, you can always say I'm a benefactress—that I found the water for Piétat, and that that's why you've got my picture up on the wall."

Spenser laid down the picture and took the slim hands in his.

"I think," he said shakily, "I think you have the sweetest nature in all the world."

He bent his head and put the hands to his lips.

"Why do you say that, Aesop?"

"Because I think you know that I love you and you want to do what you can to break my fall."

He let the slight fingers go and turned away.

"I shall hang it up there," he said quietly, "directly—directly you've gone."

Lettice put a hand to her throat.

"That—that isn't why I gave it you," she said. "I mean, why does one give presents? To people one likes? Because you want them to be happy. That's why I gave it you."

"You have made me happy, Lettice. Most awfully happy and proud."

"But, if it's true—what you say, I'm afraid you'll be . . . unhappy, when I have gone."

The man dared not look at the girl. Instead he stared at the picture with hungry eyes.

"That's my funeral," he said slowly, as though he were speaking to himself. "And I shall come through."

"I don't want you to be unhappy. I love your fable, Aesop. It's the most perfect thing. How do you think I'll feel, if I think that I've spoiled it all?"

"You've made it, my lady," said Spenser. "I was fond of it for itself, but now I shall love it because it has been your setting and because you liked it so well. I'll have to pay, of course. One always does. But I wouldn't go back. And now that I've got your picture . . ."

The girl braced herself.

"I've been very happy, Aesop. But then you know that."

Spenser put a hand to his head.

"I—I hoped you had. Piétat's a change—something different. You've found it refreshing, after—the fun of the film."

"Quite right," said Lettice. "I have. But the fable is Aesop's fable. I've been . . . very happy with him."

"I shall never forget that, Lettice."

The girl moistened her lips and the colour came into her face.

"And I shall be . . . very unhappy, when I have gone. . . . Oh, my dear, I've given you the picture. Won't you give me something . . . to break my fall?"

She was close in the man's arms and looking up into his eyes. As he spoke, his voice was trembling.

"My darling, my hands are empty. My fable's all I've got. I've nothing—nothing that I can offer 'the Longwood girl'."

"You have, you have, Aesop. Don't make me ask right out."

"Oh, Lettice, for what it's worth, will you take my name?"

With her eyes fast shut, the girl nodded her head. Then she put her arms round his neck. . . .

Five minutes later she seated herself on the table and demanded a cigarette. When the man had lit it, she laid it down and took his face in her hands.

"'The bride's presents to the bridegroom included an ox.' I'm going to choose him to-morrow. And he'll advise his master, until I come back. I expect he'll rebuke

you, my darling, but you mustn't mind that. And you really do deserve it. I've been throwing myself at your head for over a week."

"But, Lettice, sweet, how could I? I mean, the gulf I spoke of——"

"Between you and 'the Longwood girl'? I know. It's immense—not to be bridged. But then, you see, Aesop dear, it's Lettice that's fallen for you—not 'the Longwood girl'; and Lettice has always been on the same side as you."

* * * * *

The two drove to Biarritz that evening and up to *Les Iles d'Or*.

As luck would have it, the Pomeroy's were alone.

"Will you give us some dinner?" said Lettice. "Just as we are? I'm going to share Aesop's fable."

"Oh, you darling," said Belinda. "I did so hope you would. When I introduced him that evening——"

"That's right," said Ivan. "The moment she saw you, she said——"

"You be quiet," said Belinda. "And go and see about the champagne."



IN ÆTERNUM.

LOVE cannot die. It is too fair a thing;
 'Tis called a flower, and yet I know not why,
 For flowers fade after their blossoming—
 Love cannot die.

Dreams cannot fade—sweet children of the night—
 Tho' they are called fantastic things of shade,
 For dreams of beauty, born of beauty's light,
 Can never fade.

Hope will remain tho' Love and Dreams will lie
 So still that one may think them killed by Pain,
 But nothing that is part of life can die,
 So these remain.

Hope, Dreams and Love! These are the stars we see
 Lighting our gloom as lanterns from above—
 Flowers in our garden of Eternity,
 Whose soil is love!

WINIFRED BARROWS.

A CHARMING YOUNG COUPLE

◦ By MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES ◦

◦ ◦ ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLER ◦ ◦

"I WISH you'd give your sprightly friend Lady Whiteways a hint that we've only two telephone lines here, Laura," grumbled the Duke. "I'm told the old soul's hard at it for an hour each morning! Whatever made you give her a bedroom with an extension in it?"

"She asked me if we would allow her to have a telephone. Though she's so old, she's still a very busy woman."

"She would be well advised to turn her attention to that great-nephew of hers, especially if it's true that she's left him all her money."

"Is Ronny Whiteways in trouble?" asked the Duchess, startled.

"I don't go so far as that. But he's an idle young chap; and I'm told his wife is recklessly extravagant."

"I heard them described the other day as a charming young couple."

"They're a pair of young fools, if half what I hear is true."

As the Duchess passed Lady Whiteways' bedroom door a few moments later, she heard an upraised, thin-toned voice, obviously speaking on the telephone, and she smiled as she passed on, her mind dwelling, naturally enough, on her energetic guest and her guest's peculiarities.

Though Lady Whiteways was now close on eighty, she very much disliked being treated as an old woman. If only as a survival of Victorian society, she occupied an important niche in the great world. She was far too clever to affect youth, so she dressed in a way which would have been suitable in an old-fashioned lady of fifty to sixty.

But Georgiana Whiteways, as her friends generally called her, held the sound view that a woman is only as old as she feels. She might be eighty by the calendar, but

she still felt vigorous, still had a vast circle of friends, and still delighted in settling other people's affairs for them. However, as a matter of fact, this time it was someone ringing up Lady Whiteways, not Lady Whiteways getting through to someone in town.

"Is that you, Aunt Georgie?" It was the voice of her great-nephew's wife.

Lady Whiteways unconsciously stiffened herself. She felt sure an appeal was going to be made to her for money, and she was determined that she neither would, nor could, do any more for Ronny Whiteways, and his attractive, oddly-named wife, Dahlia, than she was doing already.

She knew, or thought she knew, to a penny what the young pair had to spend. Thirteen hundred a year was more than enough for a childless couple to live on comfortably, the more so that in a weak moment she had promised to pay the rent of their pretty flat in Mayfair. But though she was angrily aware that she, herself, had to pay more than twice as much for everything she bought as before the war, Lady Whiteways did not realise that this was also the case with everyone else.

"I thought you'd like to know that Ronny made quite a bit of money yesterday! It's the first commish he's had."

"Commish?" repeated the old lady, bewildered. "What d'you mean by 'commish,' Dahlia?"

"My dear Aunt Georgie! Don't pretend you don't know—'commission,' of course!" And there floated down the line the low chuckling laugh of the speaker. "He pulled off nearly three hundred pounds in about ten minutes," went on Dahlia Whiteways. "Wasn't that splendid?"

Lady Whiteways was delighted. Why, three hundred pounds represented—she

waited a moment—five per cent. on a capital of six thousand pounds. Though she would have been very much shocked to hear it, money was her god.

"I suppose you're having a wonderful time, Aunt Georgie?"

"Not wonderful exactly. But, yes, I think it's going to be a very pleasant party."

"Who's in the party?" came the carelessly uttered question.

"I suppose most people would call Sir Ralph Bannerman our brightest star."

"What does he do, Aunt Georgie?"

"Really, Dahlia! Surely you know that he's Chancellor of the Exchequer? He's putting the last touches to what Dessie Hilbry calls his bran-pie Budget. Then there's his secretary, Robert Roxly, and half the Cabinet and their wives besides."

"They say the Duchess is so delightful; I do wish we knew her."

"She used to be very fond of Ronny, when he was a schoolboy," came the quick reply.

"Yes, I know; but he hasn't seen her for ages. He wants me to know her, and we thought of coming down to your part of the world this next week-end. I suppose there's a decent hotel in the town?"

Old Lady Whiteways was not as surprised as she might otherwise have been. Ronny and Dahlia had had a small motor given them as a wedding present, and they often went out of town for a few nights. Quickly she told herself, now, that it might be a very good thing for them to make friends with the Duke and Duchess. The tale of that three hundred pounds her nephew had made in ten minutes yesterday had put her in high good-humour.

"There's a rather nice little inn by the river, called 'The Fisherman's Rest,' and there's an old-fashioned coaching hotel in the middle of the town," she called back. "But are you really thinking of coming?"

"Of course we are," came the quick answer.

"Then I'll get the Duchess to ask you to lunch or dinner on Sunday. She'll be delighted to see Ronny again!"

"Coming to 'The Fisherman's Rest' for the week-end? They'll find it very damp and cold this time of year. Let them come here instead. Everyone tells me they're such a charming young couple! And, as it happens, the Shelbournes have just 'chucked,' exclaimed the Duchess.

Lady Whiteways was enchanted. Ronny would be sure to make a number of useful friends in such a "good" house-party.

"That is kind of you, Laura! To tell you the truth, my dear, they spend far too much money on what Dahlia calls merry little jaunts——"

The Duchess gave a quick look at her guest. "You like Ronny's wife?"

Lady Whiteways hesitated. "Of course I was disappointed that the dear boy didn't marry a different kind of girl—a quiet, steady girl with money—but Dahlia is very attractive, and clever, too."

"I thought Ronny's wife had money?" observed the Duchess.

"Six thousand pounds, if you call that money?" answered Lady Whiteways in a dissatisfied tone. "But it was not tied up in any way, and I'm afraid they *may* be spending a little of her capital—so at least my lawyer hinted to me the other day. I don't know what young people are coming to nowadays——"

A worried, almost an angry look came over the withered face. "You know how kind and generous my dear husband always was to me, Laura? Also that I had a good fortune of my own? But I assure you that I used to think a great many times when I was a young woman, before I gave twenty pounds for a gown. So imagine what I felt when I learnt the other day that Ronny's wife had actually given forty-five guineas for what my niece Blanche, who told me about it, said Dahlia called 'a simple little frock'!"

She waited a moment, then added firmly: "However, the way they spend their money is no business of mine. Ronny knows that the good allowance I make him is more than I can afford, what with the income-tax, and so on——"

"Does he make anything in the City?"

"He made three hundred pounds only yesterday," replied Lady Whiteways proudly. "By the way, may I telephone to Dahlia, and tell her of your more-than-kind invitation?"

"Can't I send a message, and save you the trouble?" asked the Duchess affectionately.

"No, my dear, I shall enjoy doing it."

"Will you tell Mrs. Ronny that I should like them to arrive to-morrow? And will you kindly explain the kind of party we're having? I hope she isn't one of those foolish young women who know nothing of what's going on in the world."

"Oh, no, she's very sharp indeed! I could understand her love of fine clothes far better, if she was stupid."

"You've asked that young rotter Ronny Whiteways, and his extravagant wife, instead of the Shelbournes? What made you think of asking them to a party of this kind?" exclaimed the Duke an hour later.



"Few women are as foolishly generous as you are. Do remember that 'kindness brings its own punishment.' 'Since I had the good fortune to become your wife I've not often had occasion to forget it,' said the Duchess."

"I wanted something young and cheerful. Ronny had delightful manners as a boy, and everybody says they're a charming young couple."

"They may be a charming young couple," observed the Duke dryly, "and I don't suppose they'll be able to do much harm here. But I shall be very surprised, from what I hear of your friend Ronny Whiteways, if he leaves without having tried to 'touch' one or two of his great-aunt's old friends that may be here."

The Duchess looked horrified. "I hope he'll confine his efforts as to 'touching' to you and to me!" she exclaimed.

"He'll leave me alone," observed the Duke grimly. "But I do beg you, Laura, absolutely to refuse to give or lend him *anything*," and he had on his face the peculiar look which the Duchess described to herself as that of "him who must be obeyed."

"You think me very much more foolish than I am, James," she said in a hurt tone.

"You needn't be in the least afraid that I shall give young Ronny money. Why should I? Georgiana Whiteways is exceedingly well off, and she regards him as a son."

In fact I can't understand her not helping him more than she does."

"Few women are as foolishly generous as you are. Do remember that 'kindness brings its own punishment.'"

"Since I had the good fortune to become your wife I've not often had occasion to forget it," said the Duchess. And when he exclaimed "Eh, what?" she only answered by giving him a loving kiss.

II.

"Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Whiteways."

The couple advanced into the pretty sitting-room which was known in the castle as "The Flower Room," because the turquoise blue walls were hung with fine eighteenth-century flower-pieces.

The Duchess rose, and she gave the two who had just been shown in a quick, measuring look. She hadn't seen the young man since he was a boy at Harrow—and the War had come between.

Ronny Whiteways looked older than he was. He was tall, he had very regular features and large dark eyes; but a loose-looking, weak mouth spoilt what would have been a fine countenance.

As for his wife, Dahlia Whiteways was miraculously slender, and almost as tall as her husband. She was fair, with large pale-green eyes, and her white camellia-tinted face was very cleverly made up. But what interested her hostess, it must be confessed, was her clothes. This afternoon she was wearing a superb mink coat, and on her dark shingled head lay a sable toque.

Ronny Whiteways, though he did not look particularly happy, appeared quite at his ease. Not so Mrs. Ronny. She looked shy, and there was an odd look of suppressed excitement in her eyes. Was it possible that she felt over-awed and "jumpy" because her hostess happened to be a Duchess? Was she like the mythical lady sometimes mentioned by the Duke, "who always knew when there was a baronet in the room?"

"It's most kind of you to have asked us," she exclaimed. "I have always longed to see this part of the world, and it had begun to look as if I was never going to do so!"

The Duchess felt slightly taken by surprise. Surely old Lady Whiteways had said that the couple had been going to spend the coming week-end at "The Fisherman's Rest?"

"I'm pleased you were able to come at such short notice," was, however, all she said. "I hope your aunt told you that we're rather a serious party? I feel as if the country is being governed from here just now." She added lightly, "It's a great responsibility."

"Who else is staying here, apart from the Chancellor of the Exchequer?" asked the young man suddenly.

Before the Duchess could answer, Ronny's wife suddenly seized his arm, and she held on to him firmly while she exclaimed:

"The man who is nicknamed 'White Job'? I'd no idea *he* was here."

"He's not in the least Job-like in everyday life," said the Duchess, smiling. "He's a most cheerful, delightful person, and very fond of young people. Then there's his secretary, of course, Bobby Roxly——"

"I know him," said Dahlia Whiteways quietly.

"We've also got Lord and Lady Goring. He's 'Agriculture,' you know. Then there's Eric Farnok, who is doing so well at the Board of Trade; Mr. Findle, 'Education'; and Alfred Buick, who is sometimes called 'the thirteenth member of the Cabinet,' though he's no official position at all. I suppose some people would say that he's cleverer than the whole of the Government put together! And now"—she turned specially to Dahlia—"I expect you would like to go to your room, my dear, and rest a little while before dressing for dinner?"

To Ronny she observed: "You'll find the Duke about somewhere. I expect you remember where the smoking-room is?"

As she went along the corridors of the great house, with her new guest walking silently by her side, the Duchess told herself, not for the first time, how little anyone can rely on a second-hand account of a human being. She had imagined Dahlia Whiteways as a talkative, lively, ordinary young woman. Someone absolutely unlike this singular-looking, in her way beautiful, and rather silent, creature.

Dahlia's hostess felt glad that her new guests were going to occupy the stately apartments which had been set aside for Lord and Lady Shelbourne.

"Here is your bedroom, my dear. Ronny's dressing-room is beyond."

"What a delicious room!" exclaimed Dahlia Whiteways, involuntarily speaking her thoughts aloud.

"Yes, I think it is a charming room. I had thought of putting our big man here—I mean Sir Ralph Bannerman. But he wants to be absolutely quiet just now, as he is working hard at the Budget. So I've given him a suite which is like a little flat—cut off, that is, by a lobby from the corridor. There he and Roxly are safe from all noise and interruption."

"I suppose they are on another floor?"

The Duchess was just a little surprised at the question. "No, Sir Ralph's on this floor. In fact, just opposite, on the other side of the corridor."

Dahlia Whiteways had thrown off her fur

coat; she wore a short brown pleated skirt, and a Magyar blouse trimmed with sable. With a graceful movement she went across the room, and held out her hands to the fire.

"I'll leave you to rest, now. But I want to tell you, my dear, how really pleased I am to make friends with you," said the Duchess seriously. "Lady Whiteways was a friend of my own mother, and I used to be so fond of Ronny?" Impulsively she added, "I hope that you're very happy?"

Dahlia Whiteways turned round, and the Duchess saw that her pale green limpid-looking eyes were brimming with tears. "I'm as happy as I deserve to be," she said in a low voice. "The only man I ever cared for was killed in the war. I was so miserable, and at such a loose end, that I took the first well-to-do man who asked me. Ronny is not a bad sort, and we should be all right if Lady Whiteways weren't so mean. Even in these hard times she contrives to save. After all, the old thing can't take her money to heaven with her. Ronny is bound to have it all some day."

On leaving her guest, the Duchess lightly knocked on Lady Hilbry's door.

Now pretty Lady Hilbry, as she was always called, was very spoilt; she had everything in the world she wanted, and her husband, who was a brilliant and successful politician, adored her. She had, however, one ugly trait in her nature. She was jealous of anyone she thought more popular than herself, or luckier than herself with regard to racing, of which she was passionately fond; and passionately jealous of any woman who, by some untoward accident, could be regarded as prettier than, or even as pretty as, herself. That, however, very seldom happened, for she was really lovely, her type of beauty being the small, fair, pocket Venus type.

The Duchess, who, in spite of her kindness of nature, had a very shrewd side in her character, felt uncomfortably sure that if Dahlia Whiteways and pretty Lady Hilbry had ever come across one another, Dahlia was the sort of young married woman to whom Lady Hilbry would have taken an instant jealous dislike. So she thought it well to prepare her for the coming meeting.

"Come in!" called a gay happy voice.

Lady Hilbry, wrapped in a pale pink dressing-gown lined with white fur, was curled up in a big armchair before the fire.

"Darling Duchess Laura!" she exclaimed—"do sit down, and let's have a

gossip! We needn't think of dressing for ever so long!"

She made room by her side in the big chair, and then she put her pretty arm round her hostess's waist.

"I'm having such a good time," she cried.

"I should think you were, you naughty little thing, with all the men in love with you—and Hilbry the most in love of them all," said the Duchess, smiling. "Even James succumbs to your wiles."

"I wish he did! But no one has a chance there. To tell you the truth, I'm not a bit sorry that Sally Shelbourne isn't coming."

"That's very unkind of you, for clever as you are, you can't keep *all* my great men in high feather. However, I have secured another charmer——"

There had come just a little touch of hesitation into the Duchess's voice.

"Another charmer? Who's that? I do hope it's someone who won't go and spoil the party."

"Really, Dessie!"

"You know what I mean—though of course it was rude of me to say it."

"The people I've asked—they've just arrived—are Lady Whiteways' great-nephew and his wife."

"Not the Ronny Whiteways? Not that awful woman?"

The colour rushed into Lady Hilbry's fair face. She looked violently disturbed.

"Do you dislike her as much as that?" exclaimed the Duchess, dismayed. "It was all settled in a minute—yesterday. I saw that Georgie Whiteways wanted me to ask them. And when I said 'yes,' she scuttled off at once and telephoned. You know what she's like?"

"Dahlia Whiteways is dreadful, dreadful!" cried the other excitedly; "in fact, she's a regular adventuress."

"Come, come," the Duchess interjected, "that's nonsense, Dessie. My father knew all her people, and her brother commands the Eightieth."

"That's nothing to do with it—less than nothing! She's the most grasping woman in London. Why, she lately accepted the most wonderful mink coat you ever saw from one of the poor Russian Grand Dukes! She spends more than poor Ronny's whole income on her back, as my old nurse used to say. As for Ronny? Well, I should like you to hear Hilbry on Ronny! What money he makes he makes by cards—some people would say by card-sharpping——"

She stopped, out of breath, and she even, had the grace to look a little ashamed.

The Duchess felt irritated. It was too bad of this lovely little creature, who had everything that the world could give her, to speak so unkindly of a young couple who, whatever their faults, had none of Lady Hilbry's social and financial advantages. So she said coldly: "I blame Georgie Whiteways very much for not doing more for Ronny, the more so that she always says what I think is true—that she regards him as her own child. As for his wife, of course I am not as yet in a position to judge. But you know as well as I do, Dessie, that in a certain set girls and women do take handsome presents from men nowadays, and that no one seems to think such conduct strange."

She was saying to herself that Dessie Hilbry would not have said one word of all this had not Dahlia Whiteways been exceptionally attractive. It was really too bad!

No doubt the younger woman saw something of what was in her hostess's mind, for she went on, quickly and breathlessly:

"Of course you think I'm jealous? And I dare say I *am*—a little bit. I was getting on so well with all these clever men, and of course I know that Dahlia Whiteways will cut me out. She's awfully clever—not stupid, like poor little me. She can talk about anything to anybody. But then that's been her life's job—to get on!"

"I think she looks very unhappy," said the Duchess thoughtfully.

"I admit she had one rotten piece of luck. You remember the Mintmers' boy? Well, she became engaged to him just before the war. She's much older than she looks—far older than I am. And then he went out and was killed at Mons. But for that she'd be a Viscountess to-day."

"You must admit, too, that she's had bad luck in marrying Ronny."

"Why *did* she marry him? He's almost a half-wit!"

And then, without waiting for an answer—"I'll tell you why! She's always been fearfully extravagant, and she was fearfully hard up when she drifted across Ronny. She knew he'd be very rich some day—"

The Duchess got up, and with a twinkle in her eye, she observed: "If you feel all that about her, Dessie—wouldn't you rather have your dinner sent up on a tray?"

Lady Hilbry began to laugh. She knew she had gone just a little too far; so now she jumped up, and threw her arms round her hostess's neck. "I've been a beast," she

acknowledged. "Darling, darling Duchess Laura! I wish I was as good as you!"

"You see," said the other gently, "I can't help feeling, Dessie, what a very happy and fortunate woman you are compared to that—" she sought for a word but could find nothing better than "poor creature."

"Poor creature?"

"Yes, my dear; and that's what I should say of any girl married to Ronny Whiteways. Also, just think what *you* would feel if you had Georgie Whiteways acting as mother-in-law!"

"All right! I promise you I'll be nice to Dahlia Whiteways. Dahlia? What a name! I suspect she was christened 'Mary-Anne,' and that she just took 'Dahlia' because it's extraordinary, and sets her apart from her kind."

"One might say just the same of 'Decima,'" said the Duchess, smiling.

"'Decima' is ugly, and 'Dahlia' is lovely. That's the difference between them. Still, I promise I'll try and be decent to her. And I do agree that it's 'poor Dahlia,' as far as Ronny is concerned. But well—I don't trust her! There are depths in her that I for one can't plumb."

"There are depths in most of us that even our nearest and dearest can't plumb, as you call it, Dessie. You are far too clever not to know that."

Lady Hilbry's fears proved only too well founded. Dahlia Whiteways became at once the success of the party. For one thing, all the grave and reverend signiors already knew Lady Hilbry; she was, so to speak, one of them. But Mrs. Ronny Whiteways had never lived in political society, and so she was that "something rich and strange" for which the jaded human mind is always craving. Both the Duchess, and the charming young couple's great-aunt, were delighted.

III.

It was Monday morning, and two or three members of the party had had to leave, though most of them had arranged to stay till the morrow.

The Duchess was in good spirits, for she felt that her guests had all enjoyed themselves. At about eleven she told herself that she would go off, alone, into the town, for she was the kind of woman who likes to do her little jobs herself. But her wish for solitude was defeated, for, as she went through the great hall of the castle, she was joined by Sir Ralph Bannerman.

"If you're going out alone, may I come too?" he asked; and she detected that he stressed the word "alone."

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was the only one of her guests with whom the Duchess did not feel on really easy terms. She respected and admired him; but he had a very cynical outlook on human nature; and the only person in the world of whom he appeared to have a thoroughly good opinion was his secretary, Roxly.

"I've something to tell you, Duchess, and I fear I may want your help about a somewhat delicate matter," he observed.

"I shall be glad to help you as to anything," she said sincerely, but feeling very much surprised.

They set off walking down the carriage drive at a good pace, and, after a few minutes, Sir Ralph's hostess struck off with her companion into a solitary path, where she knew they would be sheltered from curious eyes or prying ears.

"I wonder if your quick eyes, Duchess, detected that Roxly looked perturbed this morning at breakfast?"

She answered frankly: "I'm afraid I didn't look at him."

"Two of the men spoke to me of it; and Findle ill-naturedly said that he hoped Roxly hadn't fallen in love! Now, Duchess, at his own wish, I'm going to tell you something which has greatly distressed him."

She felt full of curiosity. As there was no girl in the party, Sir Ralph couldn't be going to ask her to help his invaluable secretary and friend with regard to a love affair.

"May I begin by saying that for the present I should be grateful if you will keep the matter from the Duke? It will be, I fervently hope, the kind of case concerning which 'the least said the soonest mended.'"

The Duchess, startled, realised that her companion had suddenly become very grave; in fact, his whole expression had changed. His *débonair*, cynical look had gone.

"I wish to begin by explaining that what I'm going to tell you is Roxly's tale, not mine. I'm not going bail for him as to what he says happened, though of course I haven't the slightest doubt that he himself implicitly believes it."

She was becoming more and more anxious and uncomfortable, "What is it Mr. Roxly believes has happened?"

"He asserts positively that yesterday afternoon, after he had changed into flannels

and while he was playing tennis in the Riding School, someone went to his jacket as it hung in the dressing-room alongside the court and slipped the key of the despatch-box, in which he keeps my private memoranda and papers, off a ring he always carries on his watch-chain. His view is that the trespasser's object was to discover what a great many people would like to know just now—certain secret particulars of the coming Budget. He missed the key, he asserts, the moment he handled his watch and chain again after the tennis; but he thought it best to say nothing to me about it just then, though of course he felt most seriously disturbed. He declares that he never parts from his keys unless he is——"

"—Absolutely sure of his quarters," said the Duchess quickly. "And so he ought to have been here at our house."

"Rogues make their way in everywhere," said her companion thoughtfully. "And far more is that the case nowadays than it ever was before."

"Then has the despatch-box disappeared too?"

Sir Ralph shook his head, and then he observed, in an odd tone: "You have heard only the beginning of the story."

He waited a moment; then he went on:

"When Roxly made this horrid discovery, he tells me, he sat down, and thought and thought and thought."

"Did he think of a way of beguiling the key back on to the ring?" asked the Duchess, with a touch of sarcasm.

"He did, and what's more he succeeded. To begin with, he did something which he is not in the habit of doing. He consented, that is, to make up a fourth at bridge last evening, and that though he's a shocking bad hand at cards."

The Duchess felt bewildered. She could not think what Robert Roxly's form at bridge had to do with the very unpleasant story she was being told.

"The fact that he was tied to the bridge-table made the person who had borrowed the key feel safe, for when, finally, Roxly went up to bed, the key, so he declares, was once more on the ring attached to the watch-chain which he had left on his dressing-table! Of course he at once opened the despatch-box——"

"And I suppose he found that some important papers were missing?"

"No, Duchess. Everything there was in apparently apple-pie order, but he is quite willing to swear in any witness-box that the

papers had been lifted out, and carefully examined. Now, unfortunately, there was among them a list of certain proposed new Duties."

The Duchess saw daylight. "Poor Mr. Roxly. No wonder he's upset!" she exclaimed.

"I need hardly tell you that Roxly is the most methodical and meticulous of men. If he is right—and I have never known him wrong as to a matter of fact—someone got possession of that list for at any rate a few minutes, and so is now in a position to supply a copy of it to any human being who is interested in any trade or business which will be affected by the imposition of a new or higher Duty. It would be impossible to exaggerate the concentrated trouble, anxiety,

when he was playing tennis, and again in the evening—or that one of my fellow guests was guilty of what virtually amounted to a theft. What is more, he is convinced, rightly or wrongly, that the master mind concerned with the affair was a woman's mind."

The Duchess felt nettled. "What can have made him think so?"

"That I cannot tell you. He let it out by accident. Could he have done so, he would have taken his words back."

He waited a moment. "Now I come to the most curious thing of all, to my mind. Though I am aware that Roxly does suspect some fair lady, he absolutely refuses to tell me who it is, while willing to tell—you."

"She, if it is a she, would get short shrift



"Dahlia Whiteways leapt from the couch on which she was resting. 'Duchess!' she exclaimed, 'how you startled me. I didn't hear your knock.'"

and worry this will mean, unless we can trace the thief, and make him or her confess the coming 'Duty' in which he or she is interested."

"Of course I know nothing of the maids and valets my friends bring with them, Sir Ralph; but of my own household I am absolutely sure."

"Roxly does not suspect this to have been the work of a servant," said Sir Ralph decidedly. "His view is that either some entire stranger effected an entry into the castle, went through the pockets of his tennis jacket and got into his bedroom twice,

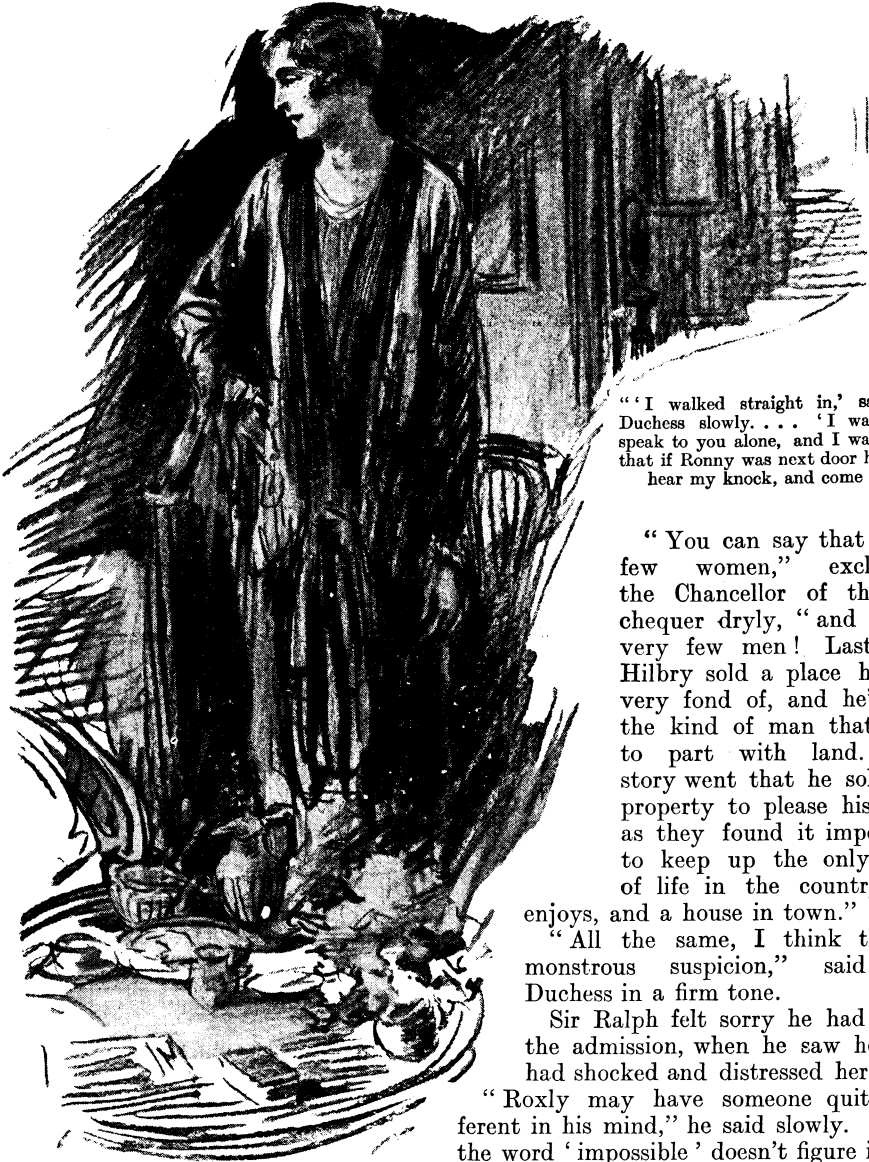
from me!" cried the Duchess.

He looked at her thoughtfully. "The temptation to many a modern woman might be almost overwhelming. Supposing I have made up my mind to increase the duty on some essential commodity. There are, per-

haps, a dozen men in the world, with almost unlimited resources behind them, to whom the knowledge of the fact before the Budget is made public would be of the greatest

"I'm afraid Roxly suspects little Lady Hilbry."

"Impossible!" cried the Duchess. "Besides, Dessie Hilbry is in no want of money."



"'I walked straight in,' said the Duchess slowly. . . . 'I wanted to speak to you alone, and I was afraid that if Ronny was next door he might hear my knock, and come in.'"

"You can say that about few women," exclaimed the Chancellor of the Exchequer dryly, "and about very few men! Last year Hilbry sold a place he was very fond of, and he's not the kind of man that likes to part with land. The story went that he sold the property to please his wife, as they found it impossible to keep up the only kind of life in the country she enjoys, and a house in town."

"All the same, I think that a monstrous suspicion," said the Duchess in a firm tone.

Sir Ralph felt sorry he had made the admission, when he saw how he had shocked and distressed her.

"Roxly may have someone quite different in his mind," he said slowly. "But the word 'impossible' doesn't figure in any woman's vocabulary, especially where money is concerned. Perhaps the poor chap suspects Georgie Whiteways"—he waited a moment, then with a laugh, he exclaimed: "She's been trying to get hold of me all this time, so that I may give her what she calls 'a word of advice' about her investments!"

Lady Whiteways? Though she smiled at the grotesque suggestion, a tremor ran through the Duchess's heart.

moment. As to what bribe such men, if dishonourable, would offer for the information—well, I can form no opinion. It might well be enormous."

"I suppose," she said, giving him a quick glance, "that *you* have a shrewd suspicion as to whom Mr. Roxly suspects, Sir Ralph?"

He did not answer at once. Then, looking at her straight, he said in a low voice:

"You will know very soon who it is that Roxly suspects," he said gravely. "But, Duchess?" He stayed his steps and she did so too. "I don't mind telling you—of course, in absolute confidence—that I don't entirely reject the possibility of Roxly having made an extraordinary mistake. He's very tired, he's overworked. And I've wondered more than once whether he imagined the story of the stolen key."

"The whole thing has certainly been built up in his mind from the initial loss of the key," observed the Duchess. "If the key was on the key-ring all the time, then of course the whole thing falls to pieces."

"That is so," admitted Sir Ralph. "Still, he's absolutely convinced that the key *was* off the ring for some hours. And, considering the gravity of the matter, it seems inconceivable he should have made such a mistake. Also it is so unlike him to refuse to give me the name of the woman he suspects. After all, the matter concerns me far more than it does him! But you've quite won his heart, Duchess. I was astonished when he admitted that he would tell you a thing that he obviously hopes I shall never know."

IV.

AT half-past three that same afternoon all the visitors who were staying on till the morrow had left the castle on an expedition to a famous ruin, with the exception of Sir Ralph and his secretary. They, it was understood, had to stay indoors and work the fine afternoon away.

Being not only a woman of her word, but also, it must be confessed, consumed with a painful and almost intolerable curiosity, the Duchess asked Robert Roxly to join her in the Flower Room "for a chat," as she expressed it. After a while he did so, looking, she noticed, very worn and stern.

"Of course you must know, Mr. Roxly, why I have suggested this meeting between us," she said quietly. "I am touched at the confidence you are willing to repose in me, and I promise you it will be respected."

Sitting down, she took up a piece of needlework. Somehow she felt that it would be easier for him to tell his story if he saw that she had something to do besides listening to him.

But the young man did not sit down opposite to her, on the other side of the fireplace, as she had thought he would do. Instead, he paced about the room restlessly.

"I blame myself very, very much," he said at last in a muffled tone.

"Come, come," she exclaimed, "I don't think it was your fault at all! You couldn't possibly have expected that anything of that kind could happen *here*."

He came over to the fireplace and, resting his left elbow on the mantelpiece, gazed down at her. She looked up, and met his anxious, unhappy eyes.

"Tell me, who is it that you suspect of having done this thing?"

He said nothing for what seemed, to her at least, a long, long time. Then he muttered: "I suspect, in fact I'm terribly afraid, that there's no doubt it was——"

She supplied the name trembling on his tongue, "—Dahlia Whiteways?" And she saw at once that she was right.

"Given that the key was taken by one of my guests—then, Mr. Roxly, I realise that it could be nobody but Dahlia Whiteways."

She saw that he was filled with emotion. Sinking down in the chair opposite to her, he covered his face with his hands, and then he said—

"I knew Dahlia long before Ronny Whiteways ever met her," he said brokenly. "Our people were friends."

"You think she was bribed to do this thing?"

"I'm certain of it," he said in a tone of conviction. "Lady Whiteways—old woman—believes that they're living on their income. She allows Ronny a thousand a year, and she thinks Dahlia has the interest on six thousand pounds. Why, they've never spent a penny under three thousand a year, and they're hideously in debt! Ronny ought never to have gone into the city. Being the fool he is, it's only brought them both in touch with a lot of unscrupulous people."

"I suppose it has," said the Duchess.

She felt very much dismayed, and very, very sorry for the unfortunate young man who was looking at her, now, with such despairing eyes.

"I shall never forget yesterday! Fortunately for me, Sir Ralph has a bad opinion of human nature. He went off to bed after I had told him what had happened, and I believe he slept quite comfortably. As for me, I sat up all night. I was in an awful state, and kept wondering what could be done. I knew there was one course open to me. I knew, I mean, that I could threaten Dahlia with going to Lady Whiteways. But even then, would she have told me the only thing that matters?"

"You mean," said the Duchess, "in which of the coming new Duties she, or rather the man who has bribed her, is interested?"

He nodded. "I don't know that she would tell me. Also, I can't bear to use that threat about Lady Whiteways, and Dahlia would never forgive me. Their whole future depends on the old woman's money."

"It's ill waiting for dead men's shoes," said the Duchess gravely. "I always wonder that people don't realise the appalling truth of that proverb."

He went on, as if he had not heard her interruption: "Then I suddenly thought of you, Duchess! I know your kindness has touched Dahlia very much. Yesterday morning she told me that you were the first woman that she had ever liked, and I believe that's true."

He waited a moment, then went on painfully: "Oh, the pity of it all! There's a side of Dahlia that's really fine, Duchess."

Then, after a pause, he added almost casually: "I'm convinced Ronny was in it too."

"Ronny!" she exclaimed. "If that's true, surely you could tackle Ronny?"

He shook his head. "Ronny," he said slowly, "for all his apparent lack of wits, is as cunning as a bagful of monkeys. Also, I don't suppose for a moment that she told him anything more than she *had* to tell him. My view is that she used him just to get the key from my pocket at the Riding School and go into my bedroom."

"But she must have been in your room too, for at any rate a little while, if she opened the despatch-box and went through the papers?" objected the Duchess.

He shook his head. "I'm sure that Ronny brought her the despatch-box, a dummy supplied by her employer being put by him in its stead while she got what she wanted."

"I wonder Sir Ralph did not suspect Dahlia."

"He hates what is commonly called 'gossip,' and lends a cold ear to it. Also, he knows Ronny to be heir to a very wealthy woman."

"And now," said the Duchess, "I suppose you want me to tackle Dahlia?"

"If you would be so kind!"

The Duchess got up. "I'll do my best," she said briefly. Then she exclaimed: "And now I do beg of you to try and get some rest, Mr. Roxly."

"I can't rest till this wretched business

is settled," he replied, passing his hand over his eyes.

The Duchess went straight upstairs to her boudoir. There she rang for her maid. "As soon as Mrs. Ronald Whiteways is back, please come and tell me. I'm not sure which party she finally joined, but one of the motors will come back earlier than the other two."

The woman looked surprised. "Mrs. Whiteways did not go out at all, your Grace. She did not feel well after lunch, so I got her a hot bottle, and she's lying down in her room."

Dahlia Whiteways leapt from the couch on which she was resting.

"Duchess!" she exclaimed, "how you startled me. I didn't hear your knock."

"I walked straight in," said the Duchess slowly. "I don't think I've ever done that to anyone before, but I wanted to speak to you alone, and I was afraid that if Ronny was next door he might hear my knock, and come in."

"He went off with the others," said Ronny's wife quickly. "But I felt very tired, and so I——"

The Duchess cut her short. "I'm glad he's out, for it's about Ronny that I've come to speak to you."

Dahlia Whiteways looked slightly uncomfortable—nothing more.

The Duchess drew up a chair, and sat down.

"A very serious thing has happened, my dear child. As yet no one but myself and the one other person concerned is aware of it. Your husband is suspected of having gone to Mr. Roxly's room and tampered with the contents of a despatch-box there——"

Dahlia remained very still. "Did anyone see him go into the room?" she asked in a muffled tone.

"I don't know," said the Duchess. "But I'm afraid there's very little doubt that he did do so in order to discover an important item of the new Budget. And, Dahlia"—she saw that the other had gone very white—"if the fact is made known to Georgie Whiteways she will certainly stop his allowance, and also cut him out of her will. Have you any idea what made him do such a mad thing?"

Dahlia Whiteways sat up suddenly. She was trembling violently.

"Come, come, Dahlia! Pull yourself together. What was it Ronny wanted to

find out? The bribe must have been a huge one, to make him take so awful a risk."

Dahlia Whiteways opened her mouth, and then she shut it again.

"Out with it, my dear! You must know, you're far too clever not to know."

And then the unhappy Dahlia Whiteways muttered in almost a whisper: "It was my fault, Duchess. Ronny was only, only——"

"—I understand: your willing tool?" suggested the Duchess quietly.

"He's such a fool," went on Ronny's wife bitterly. "I suppose someone caught him going in the second time? I know there was no one about the first time, for I was on the watch. But the second time I had to leave him to it."

"I suppose he brought the real despatch-box in here, and left a dummy in its place?"

Dahlia's pale face suddenly grew dusky red under its cloud of powder. "I see you know everything, Duchess! But—but—you've never known what it is to be desperately hard up."

"That's quite true; but I do realise how terrible must have been the temptation. What did you both hope to make out of it?"

"Five thousand pounds," said Dahlia dully. "And but for the fact that the man who tempted us to do this thing found the money, we should have left bailiffs in our flat—and only because of a stupid account of seventy-eight pounds."

"Seventy-eight pounds seems quite a lot of money to me," said the Duchess reflectively.

"Five thousand pounds would have meant a clean slate! We were going to keep out of debt, for one reason——"

"And who was the man who offered Ronny that enormous bribe?"

The Duchess was trembling with eagerness and suspense.

"He is a foreigner, and he wants to know if a Duty is going to be put on a certain stuff which up to now has been supplied only by his firm."

She lifted her sunken eyes to the Duchess's face.

"Can you get Sir Ralph to promise not to make this known to Lady Whiteways?" she asked in an imploring tone. And then she added: "You see, she does give us a thousand a year, and it's all we've got! My money is all gone, and Ronny makes hardly anything."

"I thought he'd made three hundred pounds the day before he came here?"

Said Dahlia in a shamefaced voice: "I wanted to put Aunt Georgie in a good humour, so I just *said* that. It wasn't true."

"I think I can answer for Sir Ralph if you will give me the paper on which you've made your notes?" exclaimed the Duchess. "I feel sure that *you* did that part of the business, my dear."

Dahlia went across to a chest of drawers, and brought back a dainty-looking little handbag. Opening it, she took out of an inner pocket a small piece of paper.

"Here it is, Duchess. It's a thumping duty, isn't it? Thirty-three per cent!"

The Duchess looked at the little bit of paper. "33%" was all that was written there.

The Duchess got up. "I do wonder what I can do to help you—for help you I will!" she exclaimed.

Dahlia looked at her, a strange look on her pale face.

"I think *you* could do almost anything," she said slowly. "Look how you have made me tell you what I should have said, half an hour ago, wild horses would not have made me! However, I think that helping us is beyond even your powers."

* * * * *

Ronny Whiteways had only just come out of his bath on Tuesday morning, when he was informed that Lady Whiteways wished to see him in her bedroom.

There came over him a tremor of sick fright, but he was man enough not to run into his wife's room and tell her of that dread summons.

He remembered with dreadful clearness having noticed that his "Aunt Georgie" and Sir Ralph Bannerman had had a long, earnest talk, when sitting apart from everyone else last evening.

And sure enough——

"Ronny? I had a very serious conversation with the Chancellor of the Exchequer yesterday," exclaimed the old lady.

"You, Aunt Georgie?"

"He has pointed out to me that I should be well advised to hand to you, now, ten thousand pounds. Not only would *you* escape death duties on that sum if I live on, as I have every prospect of doing, but *I* should save something quite worth having in the way of super-tax! Sir Ralph tells me he has watched your new work in the City with decided interest, and he believes this money may be of the greatest use to you at this special moment of your fortunes."

"Thank you, Aunt Georgie. Thank you!"

Almost sobbing with relief, Ronny threw his arms round her neck as he had been wont to do as a child, for he had a really affectionate nature.

"I do hope that hard-looking young woman is kind to my poor boy," said the old lady to herself.

When he got back to what he called their own quarters, Dahlia, wild-eyed, almost hysterical, was standing just within her bed-

room door, and with her was their hostess.

"I know everything. Oh, Ronny!" And they melted into each other's arms.

"The Duchess was afraid I'd be frightened at Aunt Georgie's having sent for you, so she came and told me. It's all *her*. *She* thought of it, and bucked up Sir Ralph. Isn't she an angel?"

The Duchess looked at them both. "I've got Dahlia's word of honour that she'll keep out of debt henceforth. And now I want yours," she said.



WATER PITCHERS.

PITCHERS have always had a charm for me ;
 A high romance clings to them : I can see
 The sunset light upon an ancient land,
 A young girl, with a pitcher in her hand,
 A well of water, camels kneeling low,
 A man's form etched against the afterglow.

And I can see a potter and his clay,
 A whirring wheel, its rhythm and its sway,
 A sodden mass take form : see beauty rise,
 A lifted, lovely thing before my eyes—
 An artist's brush—an oven's scarlet glare—
 And lo, a finished pitcher, standing there.

Women who handle pitchers much must see
 The same things that they always show to me :
 A loosened silver cord, a golden bowl,
 A broken cistern wheel that once was whole,
 A shattered pitcher at a fountain's rim,
 That once had sparkled brightly to the brim.

There are so many things they make me see—
 Pitchers have always had a charm for me.

GRACE NOLL CROWELL.

THE TOUR

By CYNTHIA CORNWALLIS

ILLUSTRATED BY J. H. THORPE

DORIS sighed heavily and shook her head. "Henry," she said, "is not the sort of person you can tell things to."

Edward snorted. "On the contrary!" he snapped. "You can tell him things till you're black in the face, but he won't heed."

"He'll have to buy his experience," said Cynthia.

"No doubt," returned her brother; "at our expense! If it wasn't for that he could go to glory at his own pace; but there's the family name to consider—we can't harbour a criminal."

"The idea of touring with Henry fills me with horror," shuddered Doris. "It's bad enough driving with him in his own country where all the women know the sound of his horn, and run out to collect the children, and dogs, and chickens, and things; but to think of Henry ravaging England and Wales doesn't bear thinking about."

"The only hope I can see," said Edward viciously, "is that he is such an atrocious driver that he will be arrested in the first town we go through. He's sure to kill half a dozen people in the first High Street he crashes along. Then we can leave him safely in gaol until our return, and bail him out on our way home. Bar all rot, one really doesn't want to be associated with a fool like Henry; even if we don't actually have to give evidence at the inquests, it's a beastly sort of feeling that one is more or less responsible."

"Nothing will put him off the idea," said Doris despondently. "I said I hated motoring in the rain when it seemed as if it was going to rain for ever, and now that it's fine and hot I say that motoring in the sun makes me sick. I even pretended I was sick this morning when we went into town to collect the final necessities for this awful tour, so he bought some aspirin, and a bottle of Mothersill! What can I do about it?"

"Oh, well," said Cynthia cheerfully, "you can go with Edward and forget all about Henry. I'll go and look after him,

and do my best to avoid the county gaol."

Doris clasped her hands round her knees, and stared across the garden with tragic intensity. "Thanks awfully, darling," she answered; "but you know it's even worse when I'm not with him. I wonder all the time what he's doing, and imagine him crashing into char-à-bancs, and steam-rollers, or laying out school-children and overturning perambulators, or..."

"In fact," interrupted Edward irritably, "you're determined to be unhappy under any circumstances."

"I die a thousand deaths every time I go out with him," went on Doris mournfully.

"Well, you ought to be getting used to it," retorted Edward.

"Buck up," advised Cynthia, sitting up in her deck-chair and yawning.

"Here's tea coming, and here is poor old Henry. He looks as if he'd been pretty busy."

Henry followed the maid with the tea-tray across the garden, and joined the group under the mulberry tree. He wore overalls and was exceedingly dirty. "Everything ready to start," he announced genially. "If we can get away by five o'clock to-morrow morning..."



"A few minutes later, Edward, hurrying home through the storm, came upon a rain-drenched group in the lane."

Doris shuddered. "Do go and wash, Henry," she begged.

"Oh yes, I'm going to wash," he returned cheerfully. "I only came across to get a cigarette, if someone will light it for me. By Jove, I've done a real good overhaul. I'm ready to go round the world now. The amount of grease I put in that bus would surprise you, Edward old man."

"No," replied Edward coldly. "*Nothing* would surprise me."

"Go and wash, like a good fellow," said Cynthia soothingly as she began to pour out tea.

I might say, in the teeth of determined opposition. . . ."

"We know all that," said Edward brutally. "We admit it; we admit anything. Now go and wash."

After tea Edward decided to go into the town and buy a spare tube and some petrol. Henry watched his exit through the rather narrow gateway with critical interest.

"Thought he'd do that," he murmured with sorrowful satisfaction as a faint grating noise proclaimed the fact that Edward had not quite cleared the gate-post. "And yet,"



"Above the roar of the engine he heard shouts of: 'Hold hard!' 'Pull up!' 'Stop, Edward!'"

Henry looked hurt. "Oh, all right," he said. "Anyone would think that I'd been amusing myself instead of working like a navvy for the benefit of other people. It's entirely to please you three that I've taken the trouble to organise this tour—I've worked out the whole plan, studied the maps, found out the best pubs, done all the dirty work entirely unaided; in fact,

he went on bitterly, "no one says a word, not one single word! Had I grazed my mudguard just now, everyone would have shrieked the event from the housetops. Edward would have shouted, 'Hold hard there, you bally idiot.' Doris would have burst into tears and wailed, 'Oh, Henry!' And even Cynthia would have chimed in with free advice. But Edward gets off scot-

free ; no curses, no lamentations or hysterics—not even free advice.”

He paused to light a cigarette, and sauntered to the gate. “Tell you what,” he cried suddenly, “let’s move this gate back.” He surveyed the lane into which the gateway led, and paced the width.

“It’s a perfectly rotten gateway,” he decided. “I’ve always said so, and been jeered at; but when a fellow like Edward fails to clear that gate, by Jove, it proves that there’s something wrong. I’ll start on it at once. One post will do to begin with.”

“It’s rather late to begin,” objected Cynthia. “You’ll never be finished before Edward comes back.”

“Not finished, of course,” said Henry, taking off his coat, “but I’ll have made a difference. I’ll get old John to work overtime, and Edward can do some useful work when he comes back.”

“What’ll happen if he gets back and can’t come in?” asked Cynthia doubtfully.

“He can wait outside,” retorted Henry. “I’m going to take out that right-hand post straight away. You and Doris must help me shovel away the earth and stuff as old John digs it out.”

In half an hour he had very effectively wrecked the entrance. A vigorous onslaught with a pickaxe had quarried away a large hole round the gate-post without, however, loosening its hold.

Henry mopped his brow. “I had no idea the blinking thing was stuck in so deep,” he confessed.

“Aren’t you digging up rather a lot?” asked Cynthia dubiously.

“It must be big enough to set the post back a couple of feet,” explained Henry, shovelling out the soil with feverish energy.

Cynthia and Doris surveyed the now yawning chasm, that cut half-way across the gateway, in silent perturbation. It was no use telling Henry things; the only thing to be done was to get on with the job and clear away the mess before Edward’s return, as far as possible. For some time they worked, and the post began to yield.

And then the storm broke. A few heavy drops of rain, and then a deluge. Old John hobbled away in disgust, and vanished from the scene of action; Cynthia and Doris fled

to shelter under the porch; and even Henry was forced to evacuate his trench.

“What rotten luck!” he said. “I’d have had it up in a few minutes, and set back before Edward got home.”

“Oh, look!” cried Cynthia a few minutes later, pointing to a muddy stream that began to trickle down the lane. As the rain increased so did the stream, and in a few minutes it lapped the edges of the hole and began to pour in.

“We must bail it out,” cried Henry. “Where’s my mac, Doris? And fetch me a bucket and my rubber boots.”

In spite of their efforts the hole filled with water as fast as they bailed it out, and seethed and bubbled with the muddy water almost to the top.

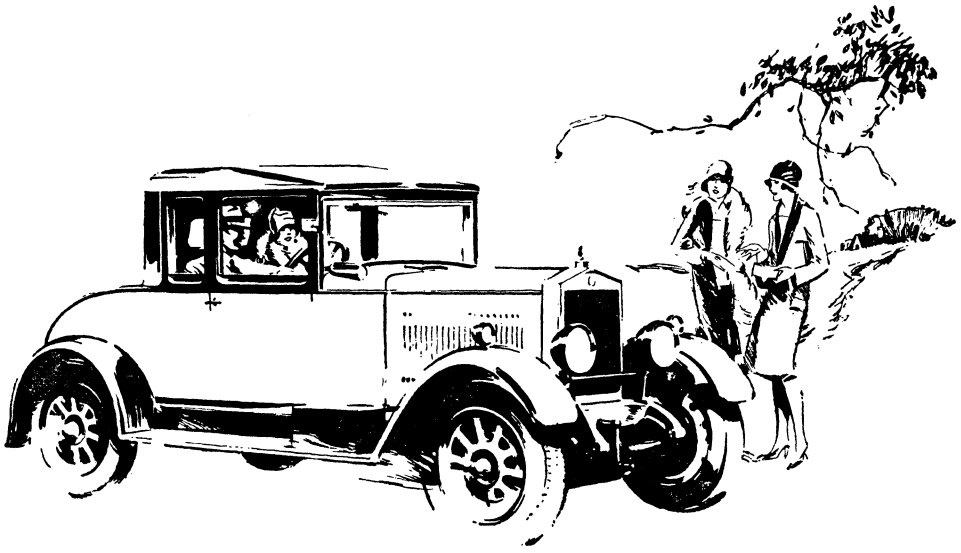
A few minutes later, Edward, hurrying home through the storm, came upon a rain-drenched group in the lane. Henry, in a disreputable burberry and rubber boots, was waving a bucket and shouting directions. Cynthia and Doris, hatless and bedraggled, appeared to be in hysterics, jumping up and down in the mud and waving their arms like semaphores. The windscreen was blurred with rain, and Edward could only get a confused idea of what was happening, and changed gear to go through the gate.

“Dash it all,” he said to himself indignantly, “do these idiots imagine that I can’t get through the gate? Henry is the blinking limit, of course. But what on earth are the girls doing out in the lane?” Above the roar of the engine he heard shouts of: “Hold hard!” “Pull up!” “Stop, Edward!” “Well, I’m *dashed*,” he said, “this is a bit thick!” And, to show his independence, he put down the accelerator and swooped into the gateway.

The next moment the car lurched forward and sideways as the front wheel plunged into a deep trench. There was a big splash of muddy water, and more shouting, above which rose Doris’s familiar shrieks.

The engine stopped, and Edward rubbed his bruised forehead where he had bumped the windscreen, and Henry opened his door.

“Didn’t you hear us say ‘stop’?” he asked reprovingly. “You’ve gone and bust up your front axle. Now we can’t start on our tour, you silly juggins. You’ve jolly well gone and messed up the whole show!”



14/28 H.P. MORRIS-OXFORD 4 COUPÉ (DROP HEAD), 48 IN. TRACK.

CHOOSING A CAR

AND HOW TO SET ABOUT IT

◦ By CECIL B. WATERLOW ◦

THE thrill of getting one's first car is a thing that can never be repeated. There is nothing quite like it, unless it be one's first home-coming from school as a child; and that too, alas, can never be repeated! I have just taken delivery of a car that is by no means my first—looking back down a long vista of years, it is seen to be, surprisingly, the ninth that I have personally owned. But it is the best by quite a long way. It has six cylinders, whereas all its predecessors had only four; and the engine is so sweet that it just sighs faintly as one glides along, the speedometer telling incredible tales, because the motion is so effortless and smooth that forty miles an hour seems like twenty.

It is usual to graduate through one or more moderate priced cars before coming to the real thing; and then one gets a thrill which is different, it is true, from the first rapture of possessing a motor-car of any sort, but scarcely less exciting. This second thrill is something like the joy of coming into harbour after a long and perhaps stormy voyage; but the voyage has to come first.

In a later article I hope to deal with the happy motorist's home-coming, and the wonderland that lies behind the harbour; or, in other words, with the choice, purchase and use of a superior and somewhat more expensive type of car. But first we will consider the cheap ones, because most people begin with them.

It is wise to begin with a cheap car of modest price, even if you can afford the initial outlay required for something bigger and better: it is wise, that is to say, if you intend to drive yourself. Paying a competent chauffeur to drive and do all the rest for you seems to me to be precisely equivalent to taking a season ticket of a very expensive kind.

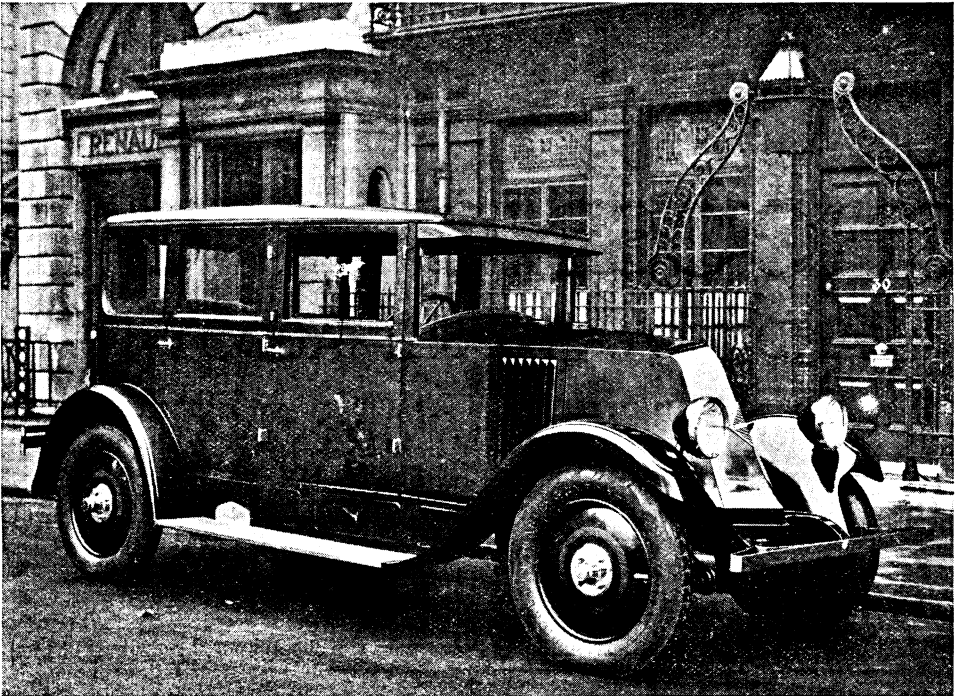
We have to live out our little lives, cramped within dimensions of time and space, on a minute planet which wends its tiny way through a Universe fantastically vast, boundless, but not infinite; and under these conditions, looked at in this way, a motor-car is seen to be the finest, most wonderful, most effective time-and-space machine that the wit of man has ever

devised. If you want to make the most of your brief passage from everlasting to everlasting—and who does not?—get a motor-car. It will help you to make the best of the time and space at your disposal. Although the world is little, you ought to possess a motor-car; so as to see as much of it as possible in your time, so as to get to know its creatures and features; for it has much to show. There is really no other way: at any rate there is no way that can be compared with motoring for benefits conferred.

After a brief glimpse of these benefits we must now come down to the “brass

and maintenance are generally neglected; in short, when any of the usual beginner's mistakes are made. They endure much; but it must not be supposed, on that account, that these mistakes can always be made with impunity, or that a society for the prevention of cruelty to automobiles could not do much good work!

Cheap modern cars obviously cannot be so good in every way as the more expensive ones; otherwise the latter would have no sale. It is difficult for the novice to grasp just what are the ways in which modern low-priced cars are not so



A 14/45 H.P. DE LUXE 4-DOOR WEYMANN TYPE SALOON "RENAULT."

tacks" of immediate practical considerations, and see what are the chief things to look for, the principal points to satisfy oneself about, in the selection of a car of modest price and power.

Beginners require sound cars: that goes without saying; and the best small cars are now very sound. They do not lie down and squeal, so to speak, when their gears are crashed and scraped excruciatingly; when they are started with the brake on; when their engines are allowed to race, owing to momentary misconceptions as to which pedal or lever should be applied; when they are overloaded; when their care

good as expensive ones, and in what respects they are just as good, and why. In ordinary commercial transactions one expects to get what one pays for. Can it, then, be possible to buy for £200 or less a motor-car that is in all *essential* respects as *good* as similar articles priced at a thousand pounds and more?

The answer entirely depends upon your interpretation of the words "all essential respects," and your conception of the meaning of "good." But for the fact that people differ widely on these points, no cars priced higher than £200 could be sold at the present stage of the motor movement;

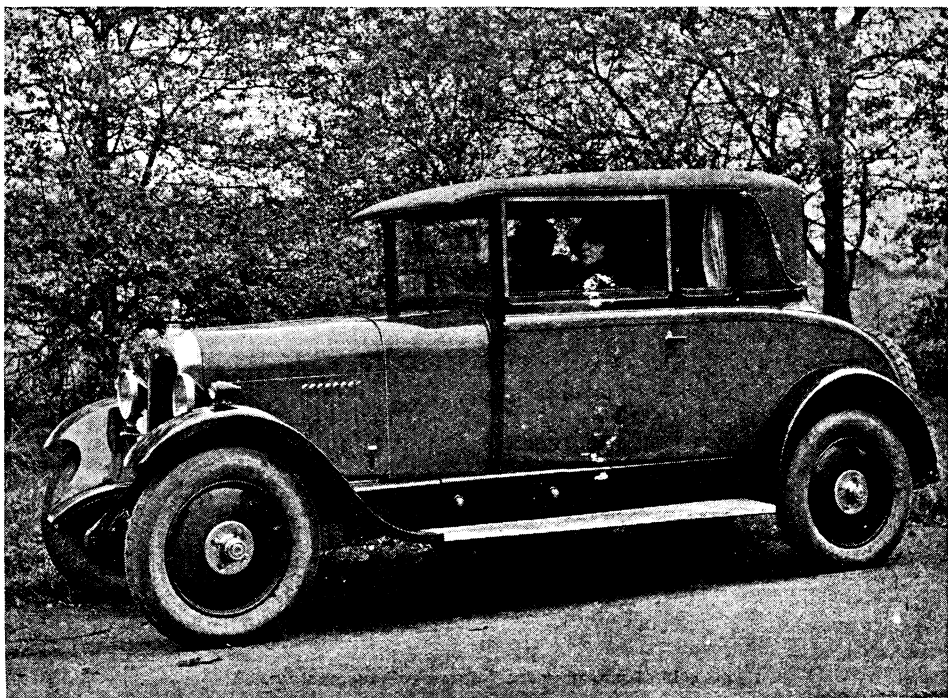
for the answer, on a simple, dictionary definition of the words "essential" and "good," is decidedly in the affirmative.

One very essential quality of any car that deserves to be called good, is durability; and in this respect the best cheap cars compare favourably with the most expensive ones nowadays. The material and essential workmanship—the word "essential" keeps on cropping up: we cannot do without it—in a Morris, a Ford, or an Austin Seven, to name three well-known and popular low-priced machines, are just as good as those which go into the

reliability of their most expensive rivals.

But these two important qualities are by no means the only ones to be considered in the complete modern car. The perfect car would possess an almost infinite variety of qualities; and, like other perfect things, it does not yet exist in our world. It takes its place among far-off, divine events in the infinitely distant future; so please do not expect to find it at the Olympia Show or elsewhere!

The inquiring novice who is really keen will want to know a great deal. Once you start you cannot but be keen, because you



A 12/24 H.P. CLOVER-LEAF 4-SEATER COUPÉ. FIXED HEAD MODEL "CITROËN."

average production costing three or four times as much. They are just as good because, in the strenuous competition of the automobile world to-day, shoddy material and inferior work quickly kill the cars that suffer from them. They are just as good because the cars named, and others also, are produced on a scale that is large and grand, by vast installations of marvellous modern machinery, which turn out their component parts with a rapidity and precision that have to be seen to be believed. The thing has been done, and it is one of the miracles of our age that cheap cars are now the equals in durability and general

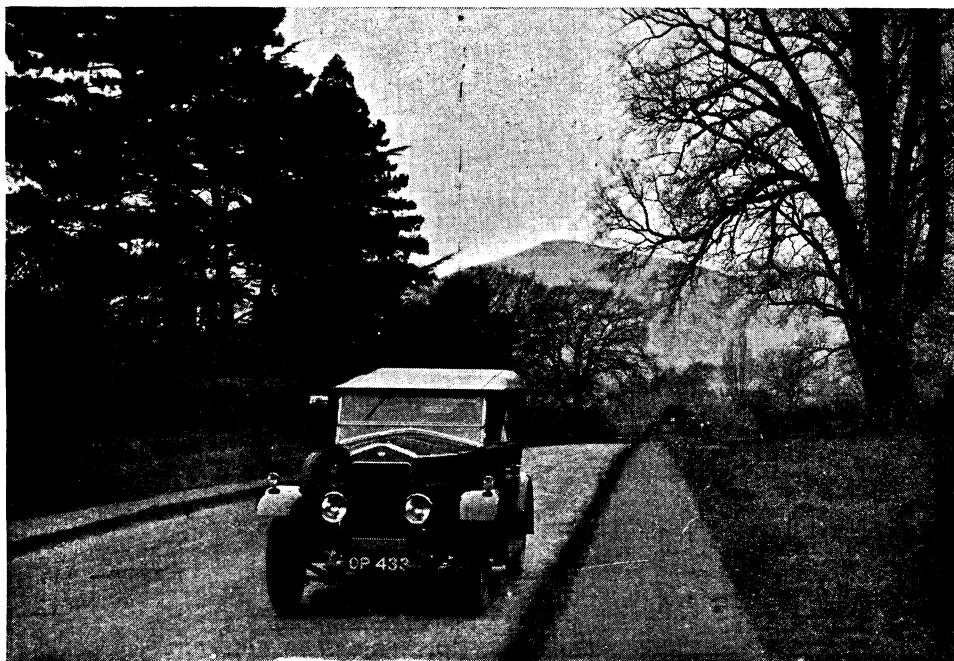
are on a road that leads into a new world—a world less cramped by time and space than the old one. The beginner will want to know why the various vehicles offered within his price range are so different and what are the respective merits or demerits of their special features. First of all, why, with three important exceptions, do all cheap cars have four cylinders and three-speed gear boxes? Why have some got overhead valves, whilst others have them located beside the cylinders? Why are the springs on some examples of the type known as half-elliptic, whereas others have quarter-elliptic or cantilever suspension? Why do

some provide a water-circulating pump, whereas others rely on natural circulation of the cooling water? Why is the final transmission by bevel gearing in some cases and by worm and worm-wheel in others? Why have front-wheel brakes and balloon tyres become practically universal in recent years? Are shock absorbers an essential part of a car's equipment, and if so, which is the best kind?

These are just a few of the puzzling questions which must inevitably come to the mind of the intelligent but ignorant novice; and if he puts them to various manufacturers

of gloves and small parcels, or a net-rack for holding similar articles in the back. Many a maker of an excellent chassis has handicapped himself and reduced his sales by not attending to such details. But it is value for money you want, and details such as these do not constitute it. Beware of them and their powerful influence upon the feminine choice. Let us consider the questions just set down one by one.

First of all, a four-cylinder engine is the best and cheapest compromise between the luxury of a "six" or "eight" and the comparative harshness of any smaller



A 16/45 H.P. LIGHT-SIX "WOLSELEY" TOURING CAR.

he will get little satisfaction, because each maker will give convincing reasons for believing that the features of his own particular production are the best ones. Everyone in the automobile world is biased, more or less. I am biased *less*; because I have no interest whatever in any manufacturing firm; but I have my personal preferences and little foibles all the same. However, they are based on long experience.

A lady choosing a car usually looks first at its body, taking its chassis, or soul, more or less for granted. Many a car has been sold simply because its colour-scheme happens to please, because it has a good cubby-hole in the dash for the reception

number of cylinders. Although wonderful progress has been made in the manufacture of moderately priced "sixes," a six-cylinder crankshaft can never be such a cheap and simple job as that of a four-cylinder engine. A four-cylinder crankshaft is straight and flat, whereas the throws of a six-cylinder shaft are set at angles of 120 degrees to one another. Bear this in mind when some specious salesman of a miraculously cheap "six" is trying to persuade you that it is infinitely superior to the whole range of four-cylinder cars offered at similar prices.

There are three important exceptions to the four-cylinder, three-speed-gear rule for cheap modern cars. These are the famous

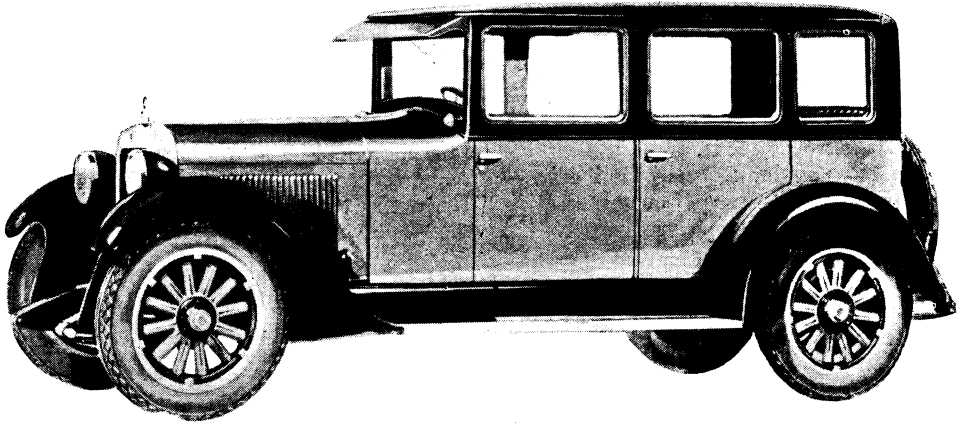
Ford Model T, the two-cylinder Jowett, and the two-cylinder, two-stroke-engined Trojan.

Every departure from standard, orthodox practice is liable to be dubbed a freak when it first appears; and a freak it remains until it has proved its worth in the hands of the average user and so achieved an established position. The three cars named have, of course, done this. They are no longer considered to be freaks. They are made and sold by enthusiasts with lots of experience, and all three well repay careful study.

Of the three the Jowett, with its engine having two cylinders horizontally opposed to one another and water-cooled in the ordinary way, is the least unorthodox. It is the sole survivor of a long list of two-

swimming metaphor, there is no danger of drowning; on the contrary, there is every chance of arriving at a new and happy land.

The makers of cars that have overhead valves will easily convince you that their engines simply cannot help being more efficient—more powerful and economical for their size, that is to say—than those which have valves at the side. They will point to the facts that every modern racing engine has overhead valves—with a few sleeve-valve exceptions—and that all world's records are held by this design. They may, however, omit to mention that extra parts are involved in overhead-valve designs, and that adjustment and lubrication require rather more care and attention; and you will certainly not be told that fully ninety per cent of commercial vehicles, in which



THE ESSEX SUPER-SIX 4-DOOR SEDAN.

cylinder cars, and, apart from its engine, it is built on generally orthodox lines. The Trojan is the cheapest of all well-established British-built cars and is unorthodox from stem to stern. It has an exceptionally flexible system of cantilever springing which permits of the use of solid tyres, though pneumatics are offered as an extra. Its twin-cylinder, two-stroke engine has far fewer working parts than any motor of normal design, and its two-speed epicyclic gear is so easy and simple to operate as to be practically fool-proof, if you will forgive the use of such a word.

Having considered the questions of number of cylinders and orthodoxy in general, let us take the valves next. I know that this is deep water for some non-technical readers; but never mind: once you begin you will want to go on; and, to keep up the

reliability and durability are of absolutely primary importance, have side-valve engines. But the point about efficiency is quite correct: there is undoubtedly a slight, general advantage in favour of the overhead-valve type. There are two systems of operating overhead valves: by push-rods from a camshaft in the crank-case, and by means of an overhead camshaft. For reasons which cannot be gone into in this article, the latter is the best; but it is not found on the cheapest cars, for reasons of manufacturing cost.

Before leaving the engine, satisfy yourself on the following points before buying a car:—that the magneto, oil-filler and oil-level indicator are all thoroughly accessible; and remember that three bearings for a four-cylinder crankshaft are better than two, whereas five are better still.

Whatever kind of springs the car you are contemplating is fitted with, make sure that they are large and long enough for their work. This is a very vital point: an expert, running his eye over a car, always sizes up the springs; and if they are inadequate, that car stands condemned. If you are approaching the subject for the first time, you can either ask an expert to assist your judgment, or you can judge for yourself by making a careful comparison of all the cars within your price range. As regards types of spring, ordinary half-elliptics, both front and rear, have been gradually gaining ground over all other systems, for cheap and medium-sized cars at any rate. Quarter-elliptic or cantilever springs, whilst they give great flexibility, are more liable to cause, or rather to allow, pitching motion on the car's part.

In the early days of motoring water-circulating pumps were leaky and unreliable. This is now no longer the case, and, especially for overhead-valve engines, pump circulation has certain advantages. It is slightly on the increase, and I have a personal preference for it.

The most popular form of final drive—that is to say, the means of communicating the motion of the propeller shaft to the

rear axle and rear wheels—is spiral bevel gearing. It is more popular than worm and worm-wheel, because, although not quite so perfectly silent, its reliability is to all intents and purposes absolute. If lubrication is neglected in a worm-driven rear axle, disaster follows quickly, whereas it comes more slowly, and with more obvious warning noises, in the case of bevel drive.

Brakes on all four wheels, balloon or low-pressure tyres, and shock absorbers on both front and rear axles, *are* necessities. Looking back to early days, one marvels at what one endured without them. Morris cars, for example, all have them; and speedometers, clocks, screen-wipers, and almost everything else you can think of as well. Almost, but not quite. Wait until you get hold of a good, comprehensive catalogue of accessories, and then see what an amazing lot of extras there are that you would dearly like to possess.

There are many, many other points to consider and study carefully in the choice of a car. Here I have been able only to put you on to some of the principal ones; and once you are *on* these, you will not stop; the desire to find out more will draw you along.

The foregoing article forms the third of a short series designed to be of service to "Windsor" readers who find that there are many points still to be ascertained and some difficulties to be overcome before they can become enthusiastic motorists. Advice will gladly be given to correspondents who may like to send any letter of enquiry to The Editor, "The Windsor Magazine," Warwick House, Salisbury Square, London, E.C.4. The next article will appear in the ensuing number, and will deal in further detail with the choosing of a car, including the consideration of some of the higher priced cars.



THE EXTRA TEN MINUTES

By PATRICK HAMILTON

ILLUSTRATED BY W. R. S. STOTT

JOHN PETERSON'S alarm clock had lived ten and a half years, which is a very ripe age to live to with only a three-and-sixpenny constitution. If John Peterson's alarm clock had been able to speak, and asked to explain its eccentric persistence in the matter of survival, as superannuated human beings so frequently are, it would certainly not have attempted to account for its condition by telling of an easy life or careful upbringing. For the vicissitudes and knocks this alarm clock had undergone, the enraged windings, the collection of boots and pillows and match-boxes that had been thrown at it, the sad amount of counterpanes it had been smothered under, the calumnious and unfair words that had been applied to it in the course of fulfilling its daily task in the most bright and cheerful manner, would really be past all reckoning.

But in spite of this cruel treatment, it is very obvious that if ever a young man did deserve his extra ten minutes, it was John Peterson. For a more over-worried, harassed, tired and overworked young man a rhetorical trade union would have difficulty in pointing to, as an exhibit. For seven years, John Peterson would tell himself, for the whole seven years he had been at work in London, he had not had one good sleep. . . . It was not that his employment actually disallowed such a sleep. Indeed, it gave him at least twelve hours out of every twenty-four in which to accomplish it. It was not his employment that was to blame, really (John Peterson would confess), but himself. For in the nine hours in which he attempted it, do what he might, pray what he might, plunge his head into the pillow and count sheep as he might—until two o'clock in the morning John Peterson was humanly incapable of Getting Off. Which was quite the cruellest and most

ironical thing in the world. For it meant that John Peterson faced his bed at ten o'clock of a night in a state of vitality and alertness he was never lucky enough to experience at any other time of the day, and awoke at six in the morning in a drugged condition he never shook off till just about ten o'clock at night again—it meant that sleep to John Peterson, unlike the deft, popped and soothing goddess imaged by the rest of the world, was a mocker and tantaliser of the most malicious order—and it meant that John Peterson seemed inevitably and invariably exhausted by his night's rest, instead of refreshed. Nevertheless, John Peterson was far from having lost his good opinion of this tormentor, and in the seven years we have mentioned, the desire for one good, undisturbed and unlimited sleep had grown and grown with John Peterson, until it had become no longer a desire, nor even a longing, but a passion. Thus, although we have every inclination to see this matter from an ill-used alarm clock's point of view, there can be no doubt that there were two sides of the question.

On the morning with which this story commences John Peterson's long-suffering but courageous machine awoke yet again to do its duty by John Peterson. John Peterson turned quickly and lay back on his bed, with his eyes closed, too enfeebled to attempt any response. The looming, indeterminate shadows of his gaunt opponent, Everyday, gathered like swift storm-clouds before his half-awake brain, and oppressed his spirit. He could not for the moment place or classify the conspiracy that opponent had hatched against him overnight, but he knew that some sort of ultimatum had been delivered, and he hunted for it, madly, during the wild tintinnabulation of his machine. Then, with a nasty start, he remembered. It was Joe Blotton. The noise itself ceased at such

a memory. . . . To-day he had to make his position perfectly clear, once and for all, with Joe Blotton. And he was afraid of Joe Blotton. Honestly afraid of him. . . .

He had known for the last four months, that is to say, ever since he had begun making love to Cynthia, that some day, some time, he would have to encounter Joe Blotton. Mr. Blotton had himself been, five months ago, Cynthia's crude cavalier, and Mr. Blotton was not the sort of person to take his dismissal and displacement by John Peterson in a quiet fashion. Moreover, Cynthia Alison was something of a prize, in a social sense, and quite apart from the natural values of her beauty. For although, to an entirely blunted sense of propriety, there may not appear to be so great a gulf socially between a small tailor's assistant cutter (which was both John Peterson's and Joe Blotton's line of business), and a jeweller's assistant, which Miss Cynthia Alison was, those who know anything at all of the finer shades of class obtaining in the circles in which this trio moved, will at once appreciate the difference. For (you must know) whereas the former vocation is only to be regarded in such circles as the vocation of an almost irredeemably Common person, the vocation of jeweller's assistant is, on the other hand, looked upon by the same circles with a strong respect—nay, veneration—as conferring on its followers a distinction whereby they become, *ipso facto*, a member of the gentry (not to say the Tory)—and of this class Miss Cynthia Alison was an unchallenged member.

And even apart from the mere foothold in Society of which John Peterson threatened to rob him, Mr. Blotton had always been antagonistic to John Peterson. Spending ten hours underground every day in each other's company, they had never got on well together. But then Mr. Blotton had not, on the whole, a prominently winning or interesting nature. There were, in fact, only two interests in Mr. Blotton's life. One was a series of amatory yearnings and conquests, which Mr. Blotton, who was in no sense fastidious, placed in his mind and speech under the liberal generalisation of "Young Leddies," and the other was an outlet for other Overman tendencies in Mr. Blotton, known as "The Game." For Mr. Blotton was a boxer. He was, in fact, by way of becoming a petty champion in that art, and was famous for having on more than one occasion betrayed his hairy breast and arms for thudding combat and the

whistlingly articulate delight of his followers in the reverberating halls of the local baths. And it was, of course, this fact about Mr. Blotton that made him doubly imposing to John Peterson; for Mr. Blotton was capable, as an amount of past instances could prove, of allowing his hobby to intrude into his everyday dealings, when everyday persuasions proved unavailing. . . .

The fact that John Peterson had known that the encounter must come about sooner or later did not make it any less disturbing when it had come about last night.

He had just said good-bye to Cynthia, and was waiting for her to turn and wave to him once again, as she always did at her corner, when he had become aware of Mr. Blotton standing beside him. He had turned round to face him, said "'Ullo, Blotton, d'you want anything?" with rather a husky voice, and received no reply. After the lapse of nearly half a minute, however, Mr. Blotton had slowly extended, for his inward contemplation and enjoyment, a particularly heavy fist on the end of a particularly hairy wrist, and tensely inquired of John Peterson whether he "saw that." To which John Peterson had returned "Yes. What about it?"

Mr. Blotton had then proceeded to advise him to be careful that he did not get it into his dirty little mug. He had tumbled, he said, to John Peterson's little game. He saw now who it was what had been making all the mischief with Sin (Sin being Mr. Blotton's more or less artistic diminutive for Cynthia), and he had tumbled to John Peterson's little game.

He continued to warn John Peterson, in fair time, that if John Peterson did not quit, and make it snappy, there would be ructions, on a large scale. He was about to re-open communications with Sin herself, he added, and if John Peterson was still to be discovered knocking about, and putting his spoke into his, Joe Blotton's, wheel, John Peterson would be called upon to pay the piper, with a vengeance. After which sagacious entanglement of metaphors Mr. Blotton informed John Peterson that he had tumbled to his little game, and bade him good night.

John Peterson had gone home and spent a thick, tossing night upon his bed, telling himself, minute after minute, and hour after hour, that Mr. Blotton's threats had not to be taken in a serious spirit, that it was all mere spleen and bluff on the part of Mr. Blotton, that it was cowardly to be afraid

of Mr. Blotton, that it was cowardly to be afraid of Mr. Blotton, and that it was cowardly to be afraid of Mr. Blotton. And a few hours before dawn he had fallen into a heavy, feverish sleep; and here he was, awakened by his alarm clock, even more afraid of Mr. Blotton than he had been throughout the night. And his alarm clock had gone ten minutes ago.

John Peterson sprang out of bed, groped about for the matches, and lit the candle.

It was a still dark winter's morning, with a clear sky of intense deep blue. There was frost in patches upon the window-pane, and the timid beginnings of ice upon the water in his jug. He washed himself as quickly as he possibly could, climbed into his clothes (which also seemed to be starched and hardened by frost), and crept down the dark stairs that led from his attic to the little living-room. Here, in gaunt candle-light and shadow, his mother was preparing his breakfast. She was not fully dressed, and indeed, like himself, not fully awake. For five stupefied minutes or so he watched her moving about in her old, worn dressing-gown, as he had done a thousand mornings before. He and his mother seldom spoke to each other at this time of day.

She put the cosy over the tea-pot (a perfectly meaningless and irrelevant cosy, being withdrawn immediately) as a dumb sign that his breakfast was ready, went to give a little inspiration to a fire as depressed as themselves, and sat over it, gazing. He moved to the table, poured out the tea, and commenced to eat. But he gave this up after a few moments, and rested his head on his hand.

"What's the matter, dear?" asked his mother. "Is that bacon too salt?"

"No, it ain't too salt," he replied. "It's I'm too tired. That's all."

"Oh, it's gettin' too much for you, all this work, dear. You'd better give it up. You really 'ad. It's too much for you."

"Oh, don't be silly, mother. 'Ow can I give it up? 'Ow can I give it up?"

"Oh, we could manage, dear . . ." said John Peterson's mother, but she had not a very managerial appearance as she looked into the fire.

"Oh, rot, mother. What's the time, anyway?"

"It's past the ten to, I'm afraid, dear. You ain't got overmuch time this morning."

"My word, I must 'urry!"

He gulped down a little tea, hacked off a

piece of bread, tore it to shreds with a lump of frozen margarine, and commenced to swallow the chaotic mixture in a way that put an effective end to all further conversation—which was as well, he felt. Then he gulped down a little more tea, rushed upstairs for his hat and coat, thundered down the stairs again, putting them on, shouted good-bye to his mother, and left the house.

The air outside was invigorating. There were few others about so early, and his foot-steps rang out, very loud and valiant, on the hard, frosted pavement. His short, dead sleep slipped back from him with each of these steps, and he began to consider his overnight brooding upon Mr. Blotton as fantastic and overstressed. He had no fear of Mr. Blotton. If Mr. Blotton solicited a fight with him, he would receive a plain and vigorous refusal. Mr. Blotton could not attack him at Mr. Bealby's, and Mr. Blotton could not attack him at his own home, and Mr. Blotton could not attack him in the street. And as for dark corners at night-time, they would simply have to be avoided. . . . In fact, there was no possible place on earth where Mr. Blotton could attack him, and Mr. Blotton's threats were altogether futile.

Mr. Blotton was a futile person. . . .

The fact remained, however, that his attitude towards Mr. Blotton had to be made perfectly clear. He had to tell Mr. Blotton, once and for all, that he had no intention of withdrawing his attentions from Cynthia, in the slightest degree. Well, he would do it this morning, the moment he saw Mr. Blotton.

Full of such high and ultimate resolve, he arrived at Mr. Bealby's establishment. Taking elaborate care to avoid Mr. Bealby, on account of the clock, he went into the low basement room, where he and Mr. Bealby's three other assistants, Mr. Blotton, Mr. Kelly, and Mr. Payne, performed their daily task. "Morning, Peters," said Payne, and "'Ullow, Peterson," said Kelly, but there was no sign whatever of Mr. Blotton.

That was a pity. Nevertheless, "Where's Blotton?" he asked.

"Our worthy chief 'as sent 'im up to the other shop," said Payne. "'Spect 'e'll be back soon."

Perhaps, then, it would be well to postpone coming to an understanding with Mr. Blotton until lunch-time. But he would do it then all right. John Peterson commenced his work.

As John Peterson commenced his work

his vigour and resolution were still at a very fair height. But when he had been going about half an hour, the stale, cloth-smelling

It would be far better then, argued John Peterson, for he always felt quite fresh in the evening.

When lunch-time came round he heard, in a sleepy haze, Mr. Blotton asking Messrs.

Kelly and Payne (to the ostentatious exclusion of John Peterson) if they would join him at



atmosphere began to assert itself, as it always did, and John Peterson's resolution underwent a noticeable alteration for the worse. He continued to assure himself, however, that he would do it at lunch-time all right, and that he had nothing at all to fear. Nevertheless, he found himself listening for the arrival of Mr. Blotton in a disgracefully sharp-eared and heart-beating style.

In fact, by eleven o'clock John Peterson's resolution had fallen into a very low state, and by a quarter to twelve, when Mr. Blotton put in an eloquently taciturn and large-fisted appearance, it seemed to have vanished altogether. Indeed, another resolution had taken its place. John Peterson had decided not to tackle Mr. Blotton until the evening.

lunch. Messrs. Kelly and Payne were readily agreeable, both being alert subordinates to the grim and commanding personality of the young boxer, though they had not come to plain-speaking terms with themselves on the matter, as John Peterson had.

"You comin' too?" asked Payne.

"No, thanks, ole man," he replied. "I'm goin' to the Usual this morning."

He went to the Usual, which was a not very distinguished eating-house in a side-street, and ordered a beef-steak. This was possibly on account of the rumour to the

effect that this type of meat fosters the fighting spirit in a man. But it certainly did remarkably little good in that direction, being the most awkward steak to overcome, and leaving him heavier and sleepier at the end than when he started.

He took a little walk along the High Road before returning to his work. A pale red sun peered through the raw light of a misty heaven. The pavements were still white with the morning's frost. The noise of the passing trams drowned every other noise. It was truly a wretched day.

"I'm a coward, that's what I am," said John Peterson to himself.
"I'm a bloomin'

"Oh, 'ow *much* longer . . ." said John Peterson, and turned into Mr. Bealby's.

All the afternoon—to the endless, confused tramp and whisper of footsteps overhead, to the rumble of the trams, to the distant wail of the District trains, and the yelling from the reeking butcher's shop over the way—John Peterson worked, in a sleepy stupor.

Payne came over to him once. "Say, Peters," said Payne, "you're lookin' a bit



"Then, quite suddenly . . . only darkness lit by flashes of white fire, and the thud, thud, thud of Mr. Blotton's fist over John Peterson's face. He felt himself falling.

His legs seemed to have lost all their vitality."

little coward. That's what I am.

"But I'm goin' to do it this evening. I'm goin' to. I'm goin' to. . . .

washed out. Feelin' rotten?"

"I do feel a bit offish to-day," said John.
"Jes' tired, really."

"You ought to give this sort of work the go-by, ole man. You ain't got the right sort of constitootion for it, you know."

"Oh, I'm all right."

"Well, you don't look all right, ole man," said Payne, and continued his work.

At half-past four the yellow, hissing gases were lit, and at six o'clock John Peterson slipped out to get a cup of tea, Mr. Bealby conceding him ten minutes for that purpose. On returning again he was glad to find that his resolution still remained fairly firm, but his heart was beating perceptibly faster. "I'm goin' to do it. I'm goin' to do it," he said.

At half-past seven Mr. Bealby's assistants began to make their hasty preparations for departure. A lighter atmosphere prevailed after the tense, stuffy work of the day. Kelly handed round cigarettes, Payne had an evening paper, and they absently discussed the day's racing. John Peterson joined in the conversation too, but in tones just too easy to sound quite easy, and on the whole a little quavery.

How was it to be done? With a stern air, "I want a word with you, Blotton"? Or fairly amiably, "Which way are you goin' 'ome, Blotton, 'cos I'd like a word with you"? John Peterson thought, on the whole, that the fairly amiable way would be the best way.

Mr. Blotton was beginning to put on his overcoat.

"I won't never do it if I don't do it now," John Peterson told himself.

Mr. Blotton was buttoning his overcoat with considerable care.

"I won't never do it if I don't do it now," John Peterson repeated.

Mr. Blotton was reaching for his hat. And all at once, just as John Peterson thought he had lost his last chance of speaking to Mr. Blotton, Mr. Blotton began to speak to John Peterson. Mr. Blotton did not do this in a direct fashion. Indeed, he appeared to be speaking solely for the benefit of Mr. Kelly, looking as he did at that individual, and employing his name.

"Wot you doin' to-night, Kelly?" he was asking. "'Fraid I won't be able to meet you as usual. I got a date with a young leddy."

"Oh, 'ave you?" replied Kelly, who also appeared to be speaking to John Peterson in a roundabout way. "Oo's she, then?"

"Namer Cynthia Alison," said Mr. Blotton. "Used to know 'er well a little while

ago. Toppin' little girl. I 'ave 'eard," he continued, with a faint protuberance of jaw, but without glancing at John Peterson, "I 'ave 'eard that there's others on the same track. But I've settled their 'ash once and for all. Last night."

The room began to sway round John Peterson's head quite fantastically.

"Oh, you did, did you?" said Kelly. "Where're you takin' 'er to-night, then?"

"Oh, we'll go to the movies, I 'spect. Take it from me, Mr. Kelly, she's a fine little gel."

"She is, is she?" asked Kelly, and the room went a little faster.

"She is and that," Mr. Blotton affirmed. "At least, she is so long as she don't 'sociate with certain undersized little insects like what I could mention. But they know their rightful place now, and are going to keep to it."

It is difficult to ascertain whether at this moment "something snapped" in John Peterson's brain. Nor is it safe to affirm that John Peterson even "saw red." Possibly it was only the protuberance of Mr. Blotton's jaw that John Peterson was aware of. The clear fact remains that John Peterson went straight over to Mr. Blotton, stood very close to him, looked into his eyes, and said, "If you so much as look at that gel to-night, Blotton, I'll knock your rotten 'ead off, you little rat!"

The universe hung fire for a moment or two, and time was suspended. "You've done it now," the gases hissed, "you've done it now!" and a passing tram rumbled deafeningly to the same effect. John Peterson still looked right into the eyes of Mr. Blotton, and it seemed as though they would stay like that for ever. . . .

But at last Mr. Blotton was heard speaking.

"Did I 'ear you speak?" asked Mr. Blotton, and John Peterson did not reply.

"Could it be that I 'eard you speak?" Mr. Blotton again inquired.

"You did," said John Peterson.

"Could it be that I 'eard aright when you termed me by the appellation of rat?" Mr. Blotton asked slowly.

"You did."

"I did?"

"You did."

"You're quite sure I did?" said Mr. Blotton, and there was a slight pause. "Oh," remarked Mr. Blotton, and swallowed, hav-

ing temporarily lost command of the situation.

"Well, what abaht it?" tried Mr. Blotton.

"What abaht it yerself?" returned John Peterson.

"'Ere, give it over, you two," said Payne, "and run along 'ome."

"May I ask if you is prepared to take the conserknences of your action?" asked Mr. Blotton.

"Oh, cut it aht," said Payne. "Cut it aht."

"May I ask if you is prepared to take the conserknences of your action?" asked Mr. Blotton.

"What action?" asked John Peterson, pertinently.

"Don't you bandy words with me——" began Mr. Blotton.

"Don't you bandy words with *me*," interrupted John Peterson. "It's you that's bandyin' the words. What do you want? D'you want a fight? You do? Very well." John Peterson himself had to swallow at this point. "Very well, then. You know Charlton Street? And you know the yard at the end where all them goods are? Meet me there in an hour's time. And now get out of 'ere before I knock your 'ead off!"

"Oh ho! So that's the notion, is it?" says Mr. Blotton. "Oh ho! Reely? Very good, my lad. Oh ho! So that's it, is it? Good."

Mr. Blotton walked over to the door.

"*Bon*," said Mr. Blotton, casually dropping into another language. "*Bon*. Distinctly *Bon*. The ospital number is Five Oh Nine, I believe, Kelly. You best be getting in touch. There'll be a new patient in to-night."

"An' so there will be," said John Peterson. "And tell 'em 'is name's Blotton. And a Blotton 'e is. A bloomin' Blotton the landscape."

"'Ere, you two, quit it. Quit it," said Payne. "Give it over an' go 'ome. Life's too short."

"Comin', Kelly?" asked Mr. Blotton, and "Rightchare, Blotton," said Kelly, and they left together.

John Peterson and Payne were awed and quiet for a little while. Then Payne spoke.

"I knew this was goin' to 'appen," he said. "Ole Blotton's been goin' on about you at lunch to-day. 'E told us 'e was goin' to say 'e 'ad a date with Cynthia so's to rile you and watch you do nothin'. Say, it was a fair treat the way you stuck up to 'im. Don't you go near 'im, Peters ole man. You

can't face 'im. You ain't got the strength. 'E'd knock you to bits in a moment. Reely 'e would. Tell you what, you let me go along to-night and tell 'im you ain't comin'. 'E can't attack you if you ain't willin', and if your young gel wants you she'll stick to you and 'e can't interfere. Don't you go, ole man."

"No, I'm goin' through with it. I'm goin' through with it. 'E ain't goin' to say things like that. I ain't goin' to stand fer it."

"What does it matter what he *says*?"

"No, I'm goin' through with it," repeated John Peterson. "I'm goin' through with it."

"Well, come out and get a drink, anyway. You're lookin' white as a blessed sheet. You oughtn't to be up and about, you're looking so ill."

"Oh, I ain't ill. I'm tired, that's all. I ain't 'ad a proper sleep for ages. I'm so bloomin' tired."

They went out into the noisy High Road. The strong lights from the great show windows of the neighbouring drapery store glared on to the bustling preoccupation of the people, who were all unaware of the crisis in the life of John Peterson. John Peterson and Payne pushed their way through to a crowded bar near by. Payne ordered a bitter for himself and a double whisky for John Peterson, and they drank in silence.

"Will you 'ave another?" asked Payne, when they had finished.

"No. I won't 'ave no more. I want to do my best. Well, I think I'll leave you now, Payne ole man. Thanks so much for all you done. It's been no end of a help."

"Sure you won't let me go an' tell him?"

"No, thanks very much. Cheerio."

He shook Payne's hand, went out into the street, and made straight for the place of combat.

He found it, as he had expected, quite deserted. There was one pale lamp spluttering in the wind, but otherwise it was very dark. He lit a cigarette and paced up and down.

After ten minutes he was joined by Mr. Kelly. "Blotton'll be along in a moment," said Kelly. "Are you goin' through with it?"

"I am," he replied.

"Well, you got some grit. 'E ain't the sort I'd like to tackle. If I were you I wouldn't put up much fight, but drop down pretty quick, and stay there. You ain't got much chance, Peterson."

"I know I ain't."

"'Ullow, 'ere 'e is coming."

Mr. Blotton was seen walking swiftly down upon them. "'As 'e decided to go on with it, Kelly?" he asked.

"Yus," said Kelly.

"'Ere, don't talk so much, Blotton," said John Peterson, becoming a little unjust. "Get your coat off, and make it quick."

All in a haze Mr. Blotton was observed to be obeying him.

Then, quite suddenly, before John Peterson was ready, there was no more Mr. Blotton, and no more Mr. Kelly, and no more yard lit by one pale lamp; but only darkness lit by flashes of white fire, and the thud, thud, thud of Mr. Blotton's fist over John Peterson's face. He felt himself falling. His legs seemed to have lost all their vitality. He heard a quaint snapping noise coming from somewhere beneath him. The thudding ceased, and in the darkness a new sensation took its place, the most curious sensation imaginable, in his leg. At first it seemed as though the limb had simply vanished, and then it seemed as though it was swelling beyond all measure. He was more interested by it, than pained. He heard Kelly saying, "That's enough, Blotton, you 'urt 'im bad." He opened his eyes and saw Kelly's eyes glaring with ferocious interest into his own. He shut them again and found that his leg was beginning to pain him seriously. The pain, in fact, was swiftly becoming unbearable. He tried to call out. Somebody, something must put an end to this agony in his leg. . . . Something must happen. Something must happen. It was obvious that something must happen. . . . He lost consciousness.

He was aware of a man's voice. "I saw it all," the man was saying. "I saw it all. I was watchin' from the very beginnin'. 'E got knocked right against the wall, an' one leg got curled all up, right be'ind the other, an' I 'eard it snap. I 'eard it go. I did. Like *that* it went." He heard the man snap his fingers, and he opened his eyes.

There was a little cluster of seven or eight men, and one woman, busily, excitedly peering at him. And there was a policeman bending over him with a hand upon his shoulder. There was no sign either of Mr. Blotton or Mr. Kelly.

"'Ow do you feel?" asked the policeman. "We want to get you on the stretcher."

"What's 'appened, then?" he asked.

"Leg. 'Ow d'you feel? I done the best I can to it. D'you think you can stand lifting?"

"Yes. I think I can."

They lifted him with great care on to the stretcher, and they began to bear him through the streets. The policeman asked him his address and also worried him with a lot of other questions. He told him that he had only been ragging, that it was all an accident. The crowd began to thicken as they carried him along, forming an elated pageant to see him home. Two small urchins ran by his side, gazing into his face with an expression wide-eyed and ecstatic. "'Ow'd you do it, Mister?" asked one of them. He closed his eyes again. The pain was still very unpleasant, but he found himself hardly thinking about it. He was so tired. So very tired indeed. . . .

He was in his room, on his bed. The doctor had just finished prodding his leg in an agonising and (to all seeming) gaily experimental way, and was now talking to his mother outside the half-closed door.

"Yes, it's all pretty well as I should like, Mrs. Peterson," the doctor was saying. "But I'm afraid he'll be laid up for at least ten weeks or so, and it'll be more than that before he can get about in the ordinary way. It's a most unfortunate happening. What on earth . . ." The doctor's voice faded away as he went downstairs with Mrs. Peterson. . . .

His leg was not so painful now, and he wanted to go to sleep. But he could not do that until he had spoken to his mother. He was uneasy in every direction. He had to ask her what she was going to do and how she was going to manage now that he was out of work, and to go into questions of insurance with her. There was an almost insuperable barrier of worldly cares between himself and his peace of mind, it seemed. For there was Cynthia, too. How was he going to meet Cynthia of a night, now? Would Mr. Blotton be taking over that function? And what would Cynthia be saying to Mr. Blotton, and what would Mr. Blotton be saying to Cynthia? And what, above all, were Cynthia's inward opinions on a street-fighter going to be? A street-fighter. . . .

His mother was lingering a long while downstairs. Why didn't she come up to him? He listened to every sound from

below, and tried to follow his mother's movements. . . .

Then all at once, he heard the sound of light footsteps in the porch outside, and then a timid knocking upon the front door. His heart gave a great leap, and he tried to still its beating, as he told himself that it could not possibly be Cynthia. Even if Cynthia were to come to him, some time or other, he told himself, she could not have heard about it all yet, and she would not come to-night.

He heard his mother opening the front door, and the low murmur of conversation.

saying. "I'm glad it's come. He was workin' himself to death, and I'm glad it's come. This puts an end to it. It's a blessin' in disguise. I've quite enough put by to weather this storm, and a good many others, if it comes to that."

They were on the landing now. "And I'm glad too, Mrs. Peterson," said Cynthia. "I've always said he was working too hard, didn't I now? And now he *can't* go on."

The door opened and Cynthia came to him, as no gracious goddess ever came to pained and weary mortal. He did not open



"By a sudden metallic noise he knew that she had taken up his alarm clock. 'E won't be wantin' *that* any more,' she said, and put it away into a drawer. 'Is he asleep?' 'Nearly,' whispered Cynthia."

Yes, it was Cynthia's voice, he was sure, and that was something; but perhaps she had come merely to make a formal inquiry, on his mother's account, and go away again. She could not do otherwise. He knew how polite Cynthia could be—how truly deadly, and coolly and calmly polite Cynthia could be. He knew just how she held her head when she was being polite. . . .

But the front door had closed, and he heard no footsteps going away again, down the street. On the contrary, he could hear the footsteps of two people coming up the stairs, and his mother's voice, raised.

"I'm glad it's come," his mother was

his eyes but saw her very clearly in his mind. "He's sleeping, I believe," said Cynthia, very low.

"Is he?" whispered his mother. "Well, it's what he wants. But stay on a little while, dear, in case. 'E'll want to see you more than anything. Sit down, dear. I'm afraid we're very untidy up 'ere."

Cynthia was heard moving the chair towards his bedside, and sitting down. He could hear the soft rustle of her clothes, and was aware of the faint scent that was always with her. And all at once the soft burden of a little gloved hand was lain across his wrist. He responded with a movement, but

did not open his eyes. He was almost too happy to do that.

His mother was moving about the room, tidying up. She was by the mantelpiece now, and by a sudden metallic noise he knew that she had taken up his alarm clock.

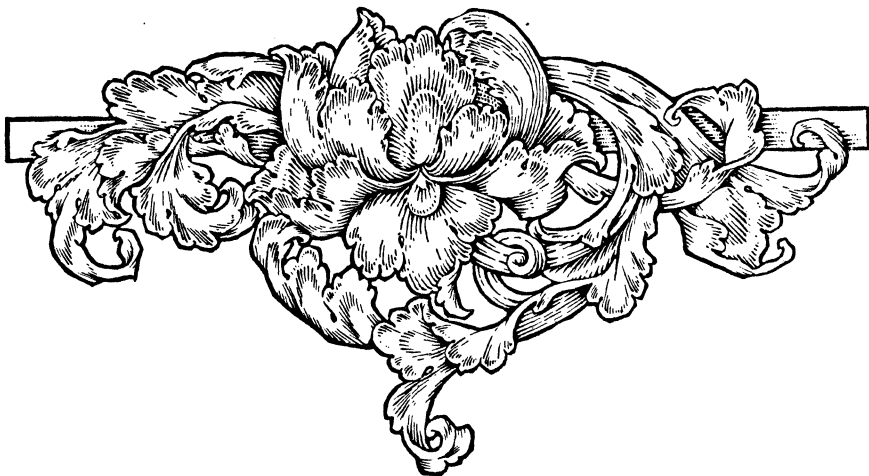
"'E won't be wantin' *that* any more," she said, and put it away into a drawer. "Is he asleep?"

"Nearly," whispered Cynthia.

And now everything seemed to be growing dim, though he could still hear his mother

and Cynthia talking in low tones. His mother was using some very strong expressions about the character of Mr. Blotton, and Cynthia was saying some very heavenly words about her lover's bravery. He wanted to hear some more, particularly the stuff about the bravery, but he did not think he would be able to keep awake much longer, however much he tried. . . .

He turned his head on the pillow. The little gloved hand renewed its pressure, and John Peterson had his sleep.



THE GOOD DAY.

ITS dawn which clothes the world in loveliness
 Gleams like a jewel cradled in the hand,
 A colour wrought in light, a tiny charm,
 Which makes the hills man's comrades, clouds his wings,
 And the winds, thoughts in which to understand
 His deathless brotherhood with all brave things.

Its noon is ageless, tender, and profound,
 Proud in great melodies and singing fires.
 Its tall white horses crowned and chained with gold,
 Ranging broad lands of beauty, chartless skies,
 Leap to the music of the threefold choirs.
 Earth, air and sea bow down with misted eyes.

Its evening is grey with terraced clouds
 Uplifted in a rosy-golden haze;
 Earth has put off her holy robe of fire,
 Her dim green fields stand steady as the sea.
 Under the gathered sunset's level rays
 Bird sings to friendly bird, from tree to tree.

DAVID McLURG.



"She drew Jean-Pierre away from the apple-tree, using such kind words as she had not used for thirty years perhaps."

THE APPLE-TREE

By OLIVER MADDOX HUEFFER

◉ ILLUSTRATED BY FRANCIS E. HILEY ◉

"I AM not a Santageot," whispered Jean-Pierre to the apple-tree. "You know that I am not."

A little spirtle of wind stirred the upper branches of the apple-tree.

"I am of Bretagne," insisted Jean-Pierre. "My father was of Kernouan, and he was killed in the war. He was in a ship and it sank."

The breeze grew momentarily stronger, so that the little apple-tree waved its branches solemnly, just as if it were agreeing to something. Jean-Pierre threw his arms round the rough trunk and laid his cheek against it. Old Madame Veuve Gassiot, looking down from her upper window in "Mon Plaisir," raised hands to Heaven and shook her head. The child was a half-wit. She had always said so, and now there could be no doubt about it.

It was a very small apple-tree and it grew in the angle of the wall at the end of the very small garden. Its trunk was little thicker

than Jean-Pierre's arm and its head was not much bigger than an open umbrella, but it was healthy enough, and it bore five apples that year. They were round red apples, hard and rather sour, but with a pleasant piquancy.

The garden was in Montreuil, which is a northern suburb of Paris. In the days of François Villon it was famous for its vineyards and later for its peaches. They still grow peaches at Montreuil, and they fetch high prices in Paris as being among the earliest on the market, but nowadays they are grown under glass in small closes between high walls, and Montreuil has become a working-class dormitory of Paris where there are hundreds of tiny villas built of ferro-concrete and tubular brick, bearing very fine names, such as "Mon Espoir" or "Les Muguets," and as hideous as only the new little villas in the new outer suburbs of Paris know how to be.

The Duponts, husband, wife and nephew, lived at "Les Glycines," which was one of the newest and ugliest villas in one of the newest and ugliest streets. Despite its name, no wistaria grew about it, but that, after all, might be remedied, as M. Georges Dupont would point out, whenever he had sufficient leisure to plant one. "Les Glycines" faced upon a sea of mud that would some day dry up into a road, and it was built of yellow tubular brick with decorations of shiny blue earthenware and a red roof of patent tiles. Its garden was really a good deal larger than a table-cloth, but so straitly surrounded by a high red wall of the same patent tiles as the roof that it seemed even smaller than was actually the case. Nothing grew in it except the little apple-tree and some wisps of yellow grass, and most of it was covered with cinders and red brick-dust; but Madame Dupont found it very useful for hanging out her washing, as she had decided from the first moment she regarded the vacant plot with the calculating eye of a purchaser.

Madame Dupont—Tante Sylvie, as Jean-Pierre was taught to call her—was not at all like her Christian name. She had a great deal of tawny hair, and she was very stout and very good-natured, and she had a very sharp tongue when needed, as was necessary very often in the presiding partner of a small *épicerie* in a working-class district of Paris. The *Épicerie* Villemer (G. Dupont, Succr.), as it was proudly styled, was even smaller than the Villa Les Glycines. It was in a back street of the Batignolles, and it sold everything from *salami* to *choucroute* and from *aubergines* to *pinard*. Jean-Pierre always thought of it as lined with silver, but that was because in the Batignolles, one lives very largely on tinned provisions, and the shelves round the walls were solidly packed with them—Madame Dupont stocked thirty-eight brands of sardines alone and almost as many of green peas. She did so well out of them that in due course she was able to attain her ambition and buy the little villa at Montreuil out of her *petites économies*, paying cash down for the very last tubular brick. Legally, of course, it all belonged to her husband—such being the law of France—but he was the first to agree that it was better in her hands than his, for he admitted freely that he was overfond of spending his spare time in the corner café, drinking *coups de blanc* and playing *manille* until all hours.

Jean-Pierre was not really Jean-Pierre Dupont at all, though he was always so

called. His real name was Yvon—Yvon Kernouec, as was his father's before him—but Madame Dupont, who had always slonged for a son of her own, preferred to call him by the name that should have been his cousin's. She treated him as a son, for that matter, and spoilt him as shamelessly, for to their longing for children in particular the Duponts added that child-worship in general, which is a quality of their kind. Added to which Madame Dupont had been devoted to her sister, even though she rather disgraced herself by marrying out of the *pays*. "Never forget, little cabbage," she would remind Jean-Pierre. "Never forget that you are a Santageot," such being the proud name claimed by those fortunate enough to be born in the ancient duchy of Santogne, now known officially as the Département of the Deux-Bièvres, but just as clannish and as contemptuous of all foreigners as in the days when a Sovereign Duke reigned in Biort and made war upon the Kings of France as and when he felt inclined.

Jean-Pierre never contradicted her, but in his heart he knew better, for had not Uncle Georges frequently told him that his father was a Breton of Bretagne, who was a brave sailor and died for France when his ship was sunk by a torpedo during the Great War, and that he himself was born in Brittany, and that his mother died there a year after her husband and before he came to Montreuil to live with the Duponts. But he knew in his heart that she did not want him to be a Breton, though he could not imagine why. That she had herself married Uncle Georges, who was born in the rue du Temple, did not strike her as inconsistent—there is, after all, something *chic* about Paris even if you come from the Santogne.

It was not altogether surprising that old Madame Gassiot, looking down from her upper window, should consider that Jean-Pierre was either a half-wit or a changeling, and that Madame Dupont was responsible. For old Madame Gassiot had very strict ideas about discipline, as you might guess from her villa, for although it was called "Mon Plaisir" it was quite square and built of blue and white brick with a flat concrete roof, so that it looked rather like a barracks. And Tante Sylvie certainly spoiled Jean-Pierre from the very beginning, keeping him away from school whenever possible on the plea of ill-health and dressing him with a smartness that Madame Gassiot would describe as disgusting, and allowing him his

own way in everything. She was a little afraid of him at heart, as her husband used to say laughingly, because he had such large dark eyes that stared through you unseeingly when you were talking to him, as though he had something more important at the back of his mind, so perhaps there was something in what Madame Gassiot said after all.

When Madame Dupont was at the shop and M. Dupont playing *manille* at the Café of the Two Avenues, Jean-Pierre would spend much of his time sitting in the brick-dust under the little apple-tree, gazing up into its meagre branches. Madame Gassiot, watching him, could almost swear that sometimes she saw his lips moving, as though he were talking to someone in the branches above him. She did not know, of course, that it was really a fairy apple-tree. Nobody knew that except Jean-Pierre and Uncle Georges, and Uncle Georges had forgotten it. In some ways it was rather like a brother to Jean-Pierre, for they were just of an age, had been born in the same old farmhouse at Kernouan and had spent the whole of their lives together. The apple-tree was a cutting from one that had long been famous throughout Brittany. It was said to be hundreds of years old and to have been blessed by the great Saint Maclou when he converted the people of those parts. Because it sheltered him from the sun while he was preaching and because the Kernouec of those days, who was a fisherman, fed him and hid him from his enemies, the Saint promised that whenever a Kernouec of Kernouan should be in great difficulty or danger he had but to throw his arms round the trunk of the apple-tree and it would open to give him shelter, and in the heart of it he would find a great treasure awaiting him. The legend had grown confused in the course of centuries, and Uncle Georges confused it still more when he used to tell it to Jean-Pierre. Some of it he had heard from his brother-in-law and some of it he may have invented under the influence of the Café of the Two Avenues, and most of it he forgot immediately he had related it to his nephew. But Jean-Pierre accepted it all as trustingly as though it came from the lips of the great Saint Maclou himself, and never forgot a word of it however confused. Even Tante Sylvie was proud of the little apple-tree in the garden, for as a blossoming cutting from the old tree it had formed part of her sister's bridal bouquet, and was afterwards planted in a pot and cared for so that it took root and flourished. Tante Sylvie brought it to Paris with her when she went to

fetch little Jean-Pierre after his mother's death, and in due course planted it in the garden of "Les Glycines," where it flourished beyond all hope. She was very proud of it and would tell the neighbours how it was of a rare variety and notable because the core of the apples it bore was very small and it had few, if any, pips. She said nothing to them about the legend, for, after all, Paris is a long way from Brittany.

Jean-Pierre's birthday—his eleventh—was in October, and Tante Sylvie made a special little celebration of it to mark that the time had now come when he should take his share in managing the business. She made a special little tart for him of the five apples off the tree, and provided a selection of all the best brands of tinned goods from the *épicerie*, and M. Georges brought two bottles of the sweetest possible champagne from the Café of the Two Avenues, and they talked a great deal about Jean-Pierre's future and the future of the *Epicerie Villemer* (G. Dupont, Succr.) and drank healths to each other and to France, *franche et loyale*, and growing sentimental wept a little and quarrelled a little and made it up again, as one does on such occasions. And two days later Tante Sylvie, while crossing the roadway in the rue d'Assise, was knocked down and killed by a motor-bus.

As you might have expected, after that everything went wrong. Georges Dupont made an attempt at carrying on the business, but he spent more and more of his time at the Café of the Two Avenues and drank more and more *coups de blanc* and played more and more *manille*, and some nights he had to be brought home and others did not come at all. He became quarrelsome too, and seemed to take a dislike to Jean-Pierre as though he were responsible for all their troubles. A slatternly *femme-de-ménage* looked after the house, who also disliked Jean-Pierre and would probably have beaten him, being fierce and virago, but that the first time she made to do so he picked up a knife from the table and looked at her with so strange an expression that she thought better of it. Then one night M. Georges did not come home, and the next morning an agent from the *Sûreté* came instead to make inquiries about him, and it seemed that he had quarrelled with some man at the Café of the Two Avenues and there had been a *rixe* and the other man was sorely wounded, and in the end Uncle Georges was sent away for three years to the gloomy prison at Fontévrauld, and there was an end of "Les Glycines."

Although—or perhaps because—they all agreed that he was a half-wit, the neighbours were very kind, and especially Madame Veuve Gassiot. She was greatly and pleasurably interested in the catastrophe, and spent nearly all her time at her upper window to see what she might see. And one day—the very day that Uncle Georges's creditors descended in force to take away the furniture which poor Aunt Sylvie had got together little by little with such loving care, she saw Jean-Pierre sitting on the brick-dust in the little garden with his face against the trunk of the little apple-tree telling it his sorrows. And because Madame Veuve Gassiot had a lean body and a sharp tongue, but a very good heart, she did not hesitate a minute. She hurried into "Les Glycines"—treading very carefully through the muddy roadway, you may be sure, and with her skirts held very high—and she drew Jean-Pierre away from the apple-tree, using such kind words as she had not used for thirty years perhaps, and she took him into her grim little house and fed him, that being, as she remembered from old days, the best way to get to a boy's heart, and she made him up a bed in a tiny room under the flat concrete roof and began to make plans for his future almost as if she had been Tante Sylvie herself.

Because Jean-Pierre was so very silent—just as a half-wit would be, thought Madame Veuve Gassiot, she had, as she told Madame Lepas-Affixe of "Villa Muguet," no idea at all what he was thinking about. Not at least until the day she told him that she had enlisted the sympathies of the Dames Françaises, which is a Society that busies itself with the orphan children of those who died for France in the War, and that he was to go with her next day to their depot in the Boulevard Lannes to see what they were going to do with him. He thanked her very politely—Aunt Sylvie had always been careful of his manners—but as soon as he was free he hurried into the garden of "Les Glycines." And when he got there the apple-tree was dead. They had been taking the furniture away from "Les Glycines" only that morning, and perhaps someone had leaned a heavy wardrobe against the tree or perhaps one of the *déménageurs* had broken it in sheer wantonness. Something at least had broken it off, some two feet from the ground, and it was dead, and there was an end to all Jean-Pierre's dreams of it.

Once again Madame Veuve Gassiot saw him from her high watch-tower and came to his rescue. And this time, Jean-Pierre,

because he was so very unhappy, told her very much more than ever before. And Madame Gassiot, out of her desire to comfort him, remembering also no doubt that he was a half-wit, rose to heights of imagination of which no one would have believed her capable. She told him, in fact, when she was acquainted with the legend of the apple-tree, that he was quite wrong in attributing any particular virtue to the little one, because no doubt the treasure was in the old one, miles and miles away at Kernouan, and that if he was a very good boy and did exactly as he was told by the Dames Françaises, no doubt some day, when he was a man grown and following some useful trade, such as a shop-assistant or a boot-maker or a waiter in a café, he would be able to visit Brittany for himself, and find the good fortune and the treasure waiting for him. And she ending up by reminding him, as was of course the proper thing to do, that all our good and bad fortune and our wealth and poverty is in our own hands, and that we have only got to work hard and be obedient to our elders and betters to be quite sure of fame and fortune without the intervention of any old apple-tree at all.

Jean-Pierre listened intently and appeared impressed, and certainly raised no objection to her programme, but the next morning when she made her way up to the little room under the concrete roof to see that he was properly dressed and clean for the visit to the Dames Françaises, she found that his bed had not yet been slept in, and that was the last Montreuil was to see of Yves Kernouec (*dit* Jean-Pierre Dupont) for many a long day. As Madame Veuve Gassiot very likely realised, being a shrewd old lady, he had gone to look for his apple-tree.

If you start to walk southward from Montreuil, keeping east of the fortifications, you will in time come to the Canal of the Ourcq, which passes through a long tunnel and comes out above Charenton, where there is a lock that gives it access to the Seine and the Marne just where those rivers meet. Because Yvon had very little idea of the direction of Brittany, when he slipped away from "Mon Plaisir" at daybreak, having first listened to assure himself that Madame Veuve Gassiot was asleep, he hurried aimlessly southward, and so came in time to the canal bank in a quiet leafy reach just above the lock at Charenton.

It was still very early and there was little sign of activity on the big barges lying moored off the bank waiting to pass through

the lock and into the river. The last barge of all was very large and black, and its upper works were gloriously painted in red and white and green that was so very bright, it must have been quite new, and there was a tiller that was as long as a fishing-boat's mast, and in the stern the neatest of little houses with white-curtained windows and quite a garden-suburb of window-boxes. Amidships was another house, not nearly so brightly painted, but even more interesting, for a broad gangway ran across the barge just before it, and looking out of a half-door that faced the gangway was the wise, kindly head of an old grey horse. Because he knew very little about the great canal-barges that carry on so much of the trade of France and Belgium and Germany, travelling for hundreds of miles over the network of canals that covers all that part of Europe, Yvon did not realise that the old grey horse, whose name was Henri, and his stable-companion, whose name was Louise, together formed the motive power of the barge, and in their time had dragged it hundreds of miles along the inland waterways. When it rested for the night against the bank, or was being towed by a steam-tug, they walked very sedately on board by their own private gangway and took their ease in their own cabin-stable.

Yvon did not speculate on these things, for before he had time to do so he was struck by two very surprising things. The first was clearly an omen, for the name of the barge was the *Pomme d'Or*, or as we should have it, the "Golden Apple." And while he was still considering this, it seemed to him, looking up, that the old grey horse was beckoning him. Actually, no doubt, Henri was merely rubbing his neck luxuriously against the side of his stable-door, but the effect upon Yvon, who was perhaps a little sleepy, was exactly as though he were being invited to enter the deck-house, and almost without thinking he slipped over the side of the barge, and was standing before the wise grey head.

There were two stalls in the length of the barge, and between them one narrower, that was used as a forage-store and was filled with hay about half-way to the roof. It looked very soft and warm and inviting, especially to one who had barely slept at all and walked a long way without any breakfast, and in two minutes Yvon, still feeling vaguely that the old horse had invited him, was snuggling in among the hay and almost at once he fell asleep.

He was awakened by a voice, and looking

confusedly down from his perch, found himself gazing into the face of a young girl standing on a short ladder with a hay-fork in her hand. She was dressed in a black overall, and she had tousled hair so fair as to be almost white, and she was staring at Yvon in blank amazement. "Who—who—what are you doing there?" she stammered, and then, before he had time to answer, "I suppose you are a prisoner who has escaped."

Before he had time to collect his thoughts she went on in a more matter-of-fact voice. "I suppose you are a *franc-tireur* and have escaped from the wicked enemy. Is your name Hector?"

"I—I am Jean-Pierre," he began, but stopped, seeing that she was annoyed at the suggestion.

"It is not a nice name," she said. "In the book that Tante Sophie gave me for my fête-day he was called Hector de Mont-beaujeu, and he hid in the hay-stack and they were searching all round for him, with great dogs, but he escaped and got safely home. The name of the book is *The Franc-Tireurs of Valsombre*. Perhaps you have read it?"

Yvon was about to explain, but she gave him no time. "This is a bad place for you to hide," she went on. "Toto will come in just half an hour, to feed Henri and Louise." She considered. "The best thing—yes—certainly the best thing will be to say that we are fiancés and that you have eloped with me from your cruel parents. That will interest Toto very much, for he also loves a girl in the Ardennes, though she cannot bear even the sight of him."

"Are they to be married?" asked Yvon with real interest.

"Be silent, while I think. They cannot take you back to prison now, for we shall not stop until we reach Mantes."

Although his hay bed had lurched oddly once or twice, only then did Yvon realise that the barge was moving. "Why—where are we now?" he asked, gazing diagonally across the open end of the gangway to where a very green bank was slipping smoothly by.

The little girl followed his glance. "We are about to pass Poissy. I know every inch of the river," she added proudly. "I have been up and down it—oh, hundreds and hundreds of times." She quitted the ladder and sat cross-legged beside him on the edge of the hay. "I like you," she said with finality. "But I do not like your name at all. Jean-Pierre—it's a name for a common, dirty boy, not for a lover fleeing from his

cruel parents. In the book which Uncle Anton gave me at the Jour de l'An, the lover is called Raoul de Pontamadour and he loves the Comtesse Fiammetta de Marjolaine. We must find a nicer one for you."

"I am also called Yvon—Yvon Kernouec," he said rather timidly.

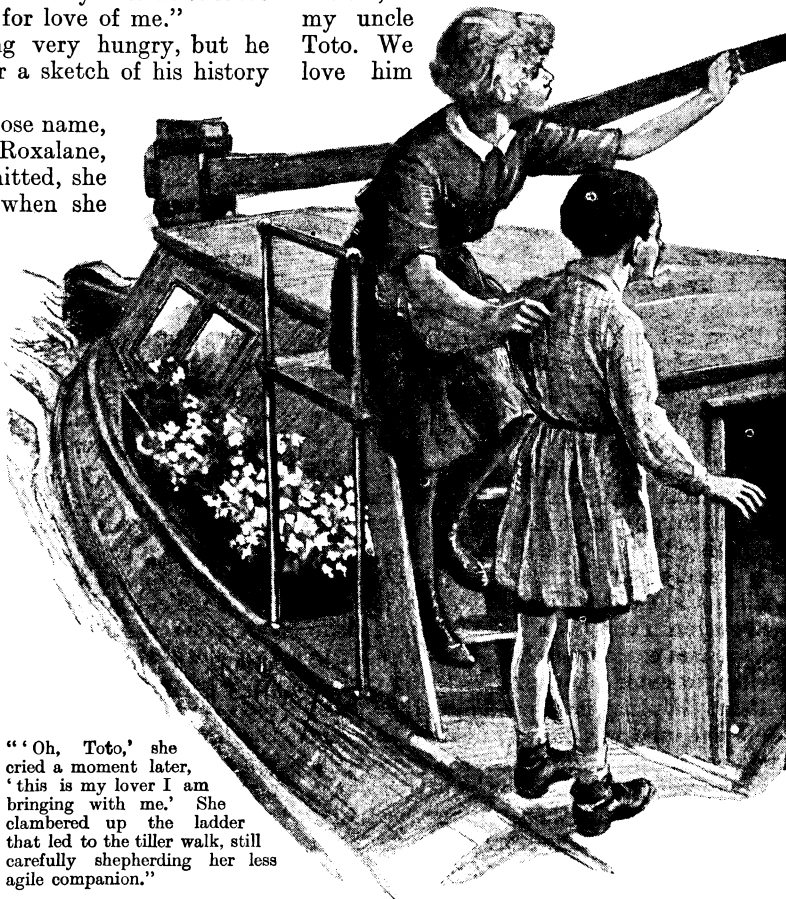
The little girl beamed. "That is better. That is very much better. I have a friend called Yvonne, which is, of course, the same. She is a Princess—at least I call her so in the book I am going to write about her—and her father is the *patron* of the 'Trois Camerades.' We shall very likely meet her at Rouen and I will tell her that you are my lover and that your name is Yvon." She settled herself luxuriously. "Now tell me all about yourself and how you came to leave your cruel parents for love of me."

Yvon was feeling very hungry, but he obediently gave her a sketch of his history past and present.

The little girl, whose name, she explained, was Roxalane, though, as she admitted, she was called Lucie when she was disobedient, showed unexpected impatience before he had finished. "We must go at once. We must not wait a minute," she told him, scrambling to the deck. "You must come with me before it is too late. Be careful how you walk. There are great fish in the river that bite your legs if you fall in, and that is very unpleasant. See?" She led him by one hand along a narrow gangway that led along the bulwarks towards the sternward deck-house. "That is Toto steering. He

must be very careful here because the stream winds, and if the tow-rope broke we should be shipwrecked." She waved a comprehensive hand towards either shore and towards the fussy tug far away at the head of the five

barges, joined by a long wire hawser, which followed it. "Oh, Toto," she cried a moment later, "this is my lover I am bringing with me." She clambered up the ladder that led to the tiller walk, still carefully shepherding her less agile companion. Toto, a large red-faced man with a tousled beard, wearing a bowler hat, a blue jersey, striped grey trousers and very yellow boots, gazed with obvious wonder at her companion. "Toto," said the little girl impressively, when they stood beside him, "I present to you my lover, the Viscount Yvonde Kernouec. He is the rightful owner of a great estate in Bretagne, but is kept out of his rights by a wicked uncle, and is now looking for an apple-tree that contains a treasure. This, Yvon, is my uncle Toto. We love him

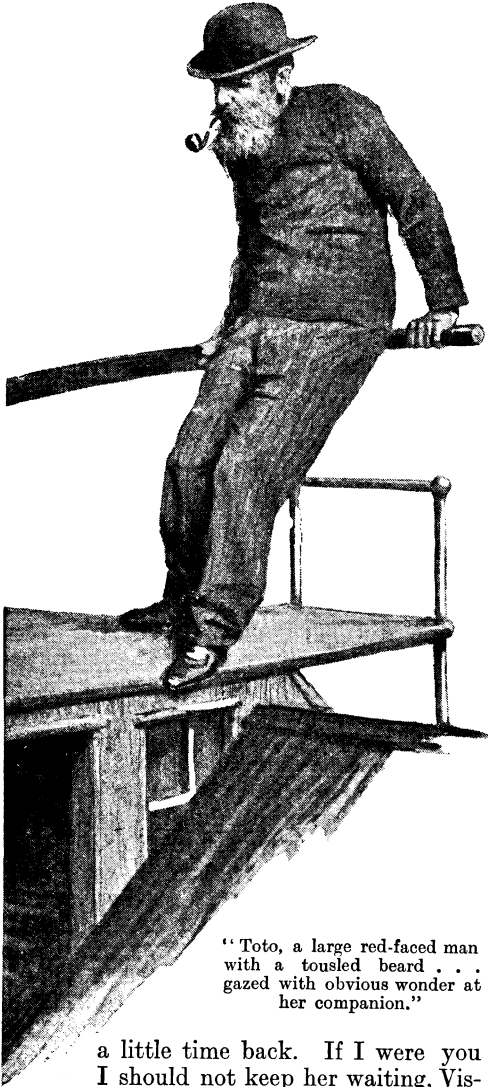


"'Oh, Toto,' she cried a moment later, 'this is my lover I am bringing with me.' She clambered up the ladder that led to the tiller walk, still carefully shepherding her less agile companion."

very much, though he is not at all romantic. He, like us, is in love. Her name is Antoinette and she lives at Cambrai, but she does not love him at all."

M. Toto, keeping one careful eye on the wire hawser, grinned rather sheepishly.

"Little Lucie," he began, but checked himself. "Pardon, my Princess, I should have said Roxalane. Maman was calling for you



"Toto, a large red-faced man with a tousled beard . . . gazed with obvious wonder at her companion."

a little time back. If I were you I should not keep her waiting, Viscount or no Viscount. She is annoyed this morning because the milk has gone sour."

"In that case," said the Princess thoughtfully, "it would be best to go at once. You had better wait for me outside," she added to Yvon. "I will explain first why you are here."

She vanished precipitantly down a flight of four steps which led to the smart green door of the cabin, leaving Yvon to gaze disconsolately at the rotund figure of M. Toto. A murmur of voices came to him through the half-open door, followed by the

characteristic "A-e-i-o-u!" of surprised French feminine protest. Followed more agitated conversation mingled with a hoarse masculine laugh, and Roxalane appeared again in the doorway. "You are to enter," she told Yvon authoritatively. "I have arranged matters."

Yvon's first impression within the cabin was of surprising luxury. There was the brightest of coloured carpets on the floor, and the furniture was of solid dark wood very highly polished, and there was a great deal of brass that sparkled quite surprisingly. A table with a red and white cover was in the middle with a steaming coffee-pot upon it, and at the further end were two bunk bedsteads let into the wall, the upper one covered with a bright-coloured chintz curtain while from the lower protruded an orange beard even more tousled than that of M. Toto, while a huge body, covered by a quilt even brighter than the curtains, occupied it.

By the table was standing a stout woman, stouter than poor Aunt Sylvie, Yvon thought, with dark hair neatly parted in the middle and a pair of pince-nez that gave her an oddly scholastic look. She had her arms akimbo, and was gazing at the door with an odd mixture of expressions, in which chagrin and amusement were predominant. "So," she said as Yvon entered, blinking in the semi-darkness after the strong sunlight outside, "so, this is he. Well, my boy, what have you to say for yourself?" As Yvon showed no inclination to say anything at all, the Princess nudged him sharply. "It is for you to declare your love," she told him. "That is not a thing to leave for the lady to do. If you laugh, Popon," she broke off at a tangent, "I will pull your beard for you."

The orange beard was suddenly jerked upwards, revealing the red face of a man even larger than Toto, who sat up on end hugging the quilt around him. "Speak, Monsieur," he said with a delighted grin, "or the little lady will leave me no beard at all."

"But—how did you come here?" asked the woman, and it was evident that her irritation was outrunning her amusement.

"Have I not told you, Maman chérie, that he had left his cruel parents for love of me," exclaimed Roxalane severely. "Besides, he's looking for an apple-tree."

"And he comes on board the *Pomme d'Or* in search of it," chuckled the big man. "That is certainly well thought of."

"That is my father," explained Roxalane.

"He looks so funny because he is half asleep, having been awake all night to work through the river-lock. He is quite a kind father really, but naturally he does not approve of lovers who seek to take his adored daughter away from him."

"That is true. That is abundantly true," roared the red man, with a laugh that jangled the coffee cups on the table. "Nu, maman, give the lad some coffee. He looks half starved as it is, and after all, if our Princess brought him here, it is not his fault. No doubt she would have pulled his beard had he refused."

"And afterwards," agreed Roxalane, "afterwards I will show him the book that Tante Emmy gave me at Easter, about the saints. It did not interest me very much as there were no love affairs, but perhaps we will find something about Bretagne in it. Come, M. my lover, seat yourself."

And thus it was that Jean-Pierre or Yvon, through the wisdom of grey Henri, was fortunately started upon his quest for his apple-tree. Indeed, matters could scarcely have fallen out better for him, for not only was the *Pomme d'Or* bound for Rouen, which was well upon his way towards his goal, but M. and Mme. Breuckelaar, the parents of the Princess Roxalane, took a warm interest in his fortunes almost from the beginning. Actually they were Belgian, their home, when they were on shore, being at Loovallon, in Brabant, and it may be that they mixed a certain Teutonic romanticism with the stern materialism of their calling. At least they carefully pointed out to Yvon the exact position of Kernouan on the map of France, and further, when in due course the *Pomme d'Or* reached Rouen and, having bade farewell to the fussy steam-tug, was made fast behind a dusty wharf covered with building material and great baulks of timber from the Jura, M. Breuckelaar made it his business to find out at the Café of the Triumphs of Agriculture, where he spent his evenings when in Rouen, such further particulars as might be of value to the lover of the Princess Roxalane. As was only to be expected, seeing how abundantly the omens had already predicted good fortune for his quest, almost the first person who invited him to *boire un coup* on his entering was an old friend of passage, Captain Hugues Levallic, a Breton of the *vielle souche*, as he liked to call himself, who was also Captain of the *Raz de Chailou*, a seagoing sailing barge that was to start for Nantes with a cargo of roofing tiles the very

next morning. Having heard Captain Breuckelaar's story, Captain Levallic at once declared himself intimately familiar with the village of Kernouan, which was no more than two hours' journey from Nantes by the new motor-omnibus to Lamballe, and thence some three hours on foot across the dunes. He at once declared his readiness to afford free passage and hospitality to any son of "Bretagne Bretonnante" who should be vouched for by so excellent a *copain* as his old friend Franz Breuckelaar of the *Pomme d'Or*.

So you are to imagine Jean-Pierre rowed out to the *Raz de Chailou* in a horrid little cockleshell of a dinghy at five o'clock upon the following morning, being more than half asleep and more than a little squeamish because the dinghy kicked and squirmed so unexpectedly in the cross-waves of the big river. On the evening before, when the Princess Roxalane was about to be sent incontinently to bed by her stern mother, there had been—as Uncle Toto could have testified, if asked—a very passionate scene on the upper deck of the *Pomme d'Or*. In the course of it the Princess Roxalane presented to her lover half a silver ten-sous piece, which, as she frankly stated, had been originally intended for another lover, of extremely high degree, who had, however, fortunately proved faithless before it had actually been presented to him. In return Jean-Pierre promised faithfully that he would be her true lover for all eternity, and, the Princess having a strain of sound commercial instinct, alternatively, that if he ever broke his vows he would at least forward to her without fail one-half of any treasure he might discover in the old apple-tree at Kernouan.

Thus it was that Jean-Pierre came at last to the home of his fathers, and, what is more, reached it with thirty sous in his pocket, having started on his quest with nothing at all, which was in itself a good omen. But it proved not to be at all the place he had come to look for. As poor Aunt Sylvie had described it to him, Kernouan was an ancient grey farmhouse standing by itself on a cliff above the sea, and the apple-tree stood in the front courtyard. But the Kernouan to which Jean-Pierre came at last was rather a town—a town of very ugly modern villas, larger and smarter and even more ugly than those of Montreuil, but every bit as new as they, flung down capriciously anywhere on the sand or rock of the sea-shore without any vestiges of gardens—the latest and most

fashionable kind of French seaside resort indeed, having so become in the last ten years or so, through the enterprise of a Paris Land Company and an energetic newspaper campaign.

In the place where had been the old farmhouse of Aunt Sylvie's description stood proudly something that looked like a miniature mediæval castle built of concrete and brown tufa, with green slate turrets and decorations of wrought iron, and an entrance gateway with a portcullis that gave upon a grass lawn across which you passed to a very important Gothic doorway with a glass *porte cochère* over it, like a fashionable restaurant. It was called the Château du Pommier, and it belonged to a very important gentleman who was a marquis and was enormously rich because he had married an *étrangère*.

Jean-Pierre reached Kernouan in the evening, and because he was tired and not greatly interested in the village, he asked his way at once to the old farmhouse, and at first no one knew of it, but at last an old lady who kept a *blanchisserie* told him about it, and when he got there he thought it the most wonderful place in the world, only very much finer than anything he had expected. The entrance gate was open, and peering through it he saw that in the centre of the courtyard was a very ancient apple-tree surrounded by flower-beds. It was so old that half the trunk had rotted away, and its arms were held up by iron supports. Only one seemed to be alive and showed a few leaves, though the evening had already fallen too much for Jean-Pierre to recognise them. At least he was quite sure that it was his apple-tree. He passed through the open gateway and approached it timidly.

It was not the seaside season, but it happened that the wife of the Marquis had just quarrelled with him for the hundredth time about his extravagance, and had hurried down to the Château du Pommier to think of ways of punishing him. It happened too that it was a fine evening, and she and her mother came out into the garden after dinner and the first thing they saw was something dark on the ground beneath the old apple-tree. The Marquise's mother opined it was a burglar and that they had better send for the police. The Marquise, who was more romantic, said that it was probably the ghost—if saints have ghosts—of Saint Maclou come back to see how the apple-tree he had blessed was getting on. It was because of the legend of the apple-tree that the romantic Marquise had bought the old farmhouse and

built the château round it and sent photographs of it to all the society papers of North America, and she was always waiting for something to happen that would revive the legend and make it necessary to send home some more photographs. She had even thought of inviting a congress of spiritualists—but that has nothing to do with Yvon.

"Why now, do tell?" said the Marquise, approaching the apple-tree. "It's only a boy—an ordinary boy." She bent down and looked at him in the moonlight through her long tortoiseshell lorgnettes. Yvon was fast asleep, his cheek against an outgrown root of the apple-tree, and he looked very small and frail indeed. "Say, Mommer," said the Marquise. "Isn't he too perfectly sweet for words?"

Her mother, who wore large round spectacles with black rims, also bent down to examine the sleeping boy. She opined that he had come to steal some of the Marquise's prize Pekinese puppies. The Marquise would not hear of it. She inspected Yvon again. "I know," she said eagerly. "It is the last Lord of Kernouan, come back to look for the treasure the old apple-tree is keeping for him." And, as you know, except that Yvon's ancestors were farmers and fishermen without ever a Lord among them, the Marquise was not very far wrong.

"Now, say, Mommer, what are we going to do about it?"

The old lady looked down at Yvon again. "He'll get his death sleeping out here in the damp," she said. "Better tell Antoine to tote him into the Shatter and put him to bed."

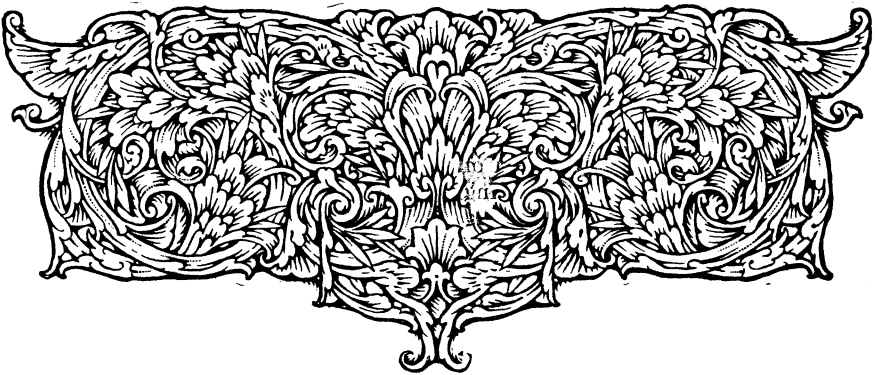
* * * *

That is the story of how Yvon came home to the old apple-tree, though a good many things happened after that. For one, the Marquise took a great liking to Yvon because he was the last Lord of Kernouan, as she insisted. She sent photographs of him and of herself and the apple-tree and the château to all the society papers, and she got a learned man in Paris to make out for him a pedigree that went back to the days of Caer Coll of the Black Hand and branched off somewhere about the twelfth century to include the ancestors of the Perhammer family, which was hers before she was married, and always called Yvon her cousin after that. What was even more to the point, she paid for his education, and although she regretted some of her whimsies she never regretted that, for Yvon—his

name of Jean-Pierre was dropped for good and all—became in course of time a great savant and a botanist of world-wide fame. Not only was he Director of the great Horticultural School at Villepreux ; his greatest fame was as the inventor, or discoverer, or breeder—I am not sure which is the real name—of an apple without either core or pips—so you can understand how housewives all over the world, to say nothing of little greedy boys, have cause to bless his name. And it is a curious thing that this experiment began with the very last apple that grew upon the old tree at Kernouan two months before it was blown down in a storm and died. So, as his adopted cousin the Mar-

quise declared—she was older by that time and had a good deal more sense—there really was a treasure hidden away in the old apple-tree awaiting the last of the Kernouecs.

As to the Princess Roxalane, well—of course she got her share of the treasure too, and if you should ever happen to walk down the rue de la Paroisse in Versailles on a Sunday morning about church-time and happen to see a very good-looking lady in black silk with two little girls in white georgette and pink sashes and a husband to whom everybody passing doffs their hats as to a famous scientist—but that, after all, is the affair of M. le Docteur Yvon Kernouec, late of Kernouan, and Madame.



THE GREAT SCHEIDECK.

THE gentians on the Scheideck
Are stars of sapphire blue ;
And as your footsteps slowly pass
Across the sunny, close-cropped grass,
They twinkle up at you.

The wind upon the Scheideck
Blows right from Heaven's Gate ;
Its keen, clear freshness mocks at death,
The joy of life is in its breath :
It laughs like happy fate.

The view upon the Scheideck
Is very fair to see ;
The snows rise peerless towards the sky,
Meadows, flower-starred, beneath them lie,
Dear memories for me !

L. G. MOBERLY.

FAMOUS PERSONS

By MRS. HENRY DUDENEY

ILLUSTRATED BY T. H. ROBINSON

EUGENIE came and leaned over the half-door; looking mockingly into the smithy, where Robert was shoeing a horse and talking to the groom who had brought her. Eugenie studied Robert—as she studied everything. She memorised his square face; rugged, yet you could hardly call it ugly! She looked at his leather apron, which ranged in colour from sulky orange to sooty black; she looked at his muscular arms. She stared at the wide chimney which glowed with red coke. It was rather fun watching Robert, as he blew; his right hand holding the bellows, his left holding the horseshoe at the end of a pair of long pincers. Yet the whole thing was rustic, intolerable; and the sizzling smell of singed horn made her feel sick.

However, it was as well to visualise the smithy and the smith this morning; for she would never see either again.

Robert looked suddenly up from his shoeing with a curt, "Morning, Eugenie."

And he saw that upon her long, sad face the paint was thick. Her reddened mouth seemed too large; it was a cruel mouth. Her eyes, heavily blacked, looked bold. Robert's mind was moving freely and he—who could always think of things—felt as if a strange bird stood looking in at the door of his forge; some macaw from a foreign land; a creature all crimson and blue. It was bigger and twenty times bolder than the dun sparrows and silvery lark, speckled thrushes and orange-throated robins that lived in Sussex.

He felt like that about Eugenie this morning; then, turning away, he went on talking to Bill Tompsett the groom about horses.

"They got brittle feet, these thoroughbreds; a trouble to shoe. But they're beautiful creatures and motors haven't quite driven 'em off the roads yet."

Bill Tompsett was an old man, and he said sadly:

"Horseflesh ain't much account these days. When I was young the Squire had

twenty in the stables; there was flat-racers and steeplechasers too."

He went off with his mare when her shoeing was done.

Eugenie entered. She came and sat upon a rough stool, in the flicker and the murkiness of the smithy. She sat down and waited for Robert to speak, and as she waited she looked through the open half-door at this land where she had been born and which, until lately, had contented her. For really, until lately—and here she slightly shrugged her shoulders—she had been as stupid and as jog-trot as Robert.

The day was March and, as she watched, the world changed more than once. When the sun shone, the hills which encompassed this village were high, remote and misty; but when the sun went behind a cloud and when the wind screamed, they stooped over you with clenched fists. And, at those moments, the allotments which climbed the slope of the hill spread like a dirty rash. Eugenie carelessly wondered why, when there was so much talk about beauty, allotment holdings were allowed upon the hills. Each one was an untidy little garbage patch—and nothing else. They were fenced off from each other by bits of old iron bedsteads or tangled-up chicken wire. Each one had its little hut built of packing-cases. Certainly, people in the country were ugly in their ways and dull in their thoughts! Then the sun came out and, as Bill Tompsett led the mare up the street, his old red waistcoat became the colour of wine; and the mare's coat, so Eugenie luxuriously fancied, was nothing but ambery satin. She must remember all this; there was so much to remember, and it would be a pity to forget. Yet you could not carry about a note-book and pencil; for that would be like a police sergeant making notes! And she watched old Mrs. Waghorn come into her garden to hang a red blanket upon the clothes-line. She listened to the thwacking of a bamboo stick in the Vicarage garden, which was

surrounded with a wall of silvery flint-stone. This was spring-cleaning time in the village. She sat there smiling till Robert asked, abruptly:

"Got anything to laugh about, Eugenie?"

"Good gracious, yes! Lots."

"Laughed so much that you haven't found time to wash your face."

She looked at him a little haughtily, for she had

"Also," thought Eugenie, as she sat on the wooden stool with her painted face upturned to Robert's, "I have more education."

For she was quite a brilliant girl—as



"Eugenie came and leaned over the half-door; looking mockingly into the smithy."

always considered him a social inferior. He was the village blacksmith; her father had been the village chemist. He had died insolvent; but that made no difference. A chemist, argued Eugenie, was really half a professional man.

Robert had money, for his was a flourishing craft; also his father had left him plenty; while her father had not left her a sou. But what was money? And—as to that—she would soon earn more than she could possibly spend.

scholastic brilliance goes. She took examinations as easily as a race-horse takes a hurdle.

She was second mistress at the village school and some day she would be the head mistress. This, at least, had been her ambition until lately. But now it seemed the funniest idea in the world.

Yet there was some link between her and Robert; a certain subtle understanding: not expressed, but certainly there.

So that she had assumed, in coming to the smithy this morning with her tremendous

her. As time went on he might get a little narrow-chested and grey; all alone in the smithy. For he would not marry.

Then she asked herself—and it was a bewildering new query—"Will he marry?"



"Robert looked suddenly up from his sloeing with a curt, 'Morning, Eugenie.'"

news, that Robert would understand just how she felt. Robert, also, would follow her career with proud interest, and she instantly visualised him: alone in his smithy, as the months and the years went on. He would be looking at her portraits in the papers and reading paragraphs about

Whether he did or did not, he would never break his heart about her; for there was no sentimental nonsense about their friendship. Eugenie had always been far too ambitious to bother about love, and Robert—so far as she knew—had his heart in his smithy.

Robert would be proud of her ; and he would be the only one. For it annoyed her to admit that the rest of the village would remain indifferent ; it might even feel annoyed with her for throwing up a good Government job. Sage people would declare that Eugenie was a young fool !

"Why did you come out without washing your face ?" persisted Robert, standing over her.

"Anyone would think," returned Eugenie, "that it was your face and not mine. And how pretty those are !"

She pointed to a row of delicate horseshoes and racing plates upon the wall.

"Father nailed them up ; and whenever a winner came to be shod he kept the old shoe. He was keen on his trade."

"Aren't you ?"

"Not in the same way. Things have changed and I'm more interested in this wrought-iron work." He pointed to a railing. "And why have you come to me this morning looking like Jezebel ?"

"She," Eugenie was crisp, "looked out of the window. I looked in at a door. To tell you the truth, Robert, I could not bear to wash my face, which would mean changing it. Of course I shall go back and wash in a minute, but I want to tell you something first."

He did not seem excited ; she felt that he ought to be. She looked at him coldly ; sickened by his plain rustic appearance and country slowness. For her own mind was racing with fairyfied visions. "Were you at the performance last night ?" she asked.

"Course I was, in the second row. Didn't you see me ?"

"We don't see the audience ; it simply doesn't exist," she told him superbly. "But do say I acted beautifully. Everybody thought so."

"I'm not one to contradict, Eugenie."

"You are annoying this morning. But I will surprise you in a minute, Robert."

"Perhaps I can surprise you, the minute after."

"Oh no, you couldn't ; in the same way."

"I think," he walked about his warm smithy that was filled with shadows, "this play-acting in the villages is a mistake. We don't want to have our minds enlarged, our eyes opened to beauty—and all that sort of stuff which they talk. I'd rather be left alone."

"You would," she was bitterly impatient, "but others would not. And do you know

that we are making quite a stir with these Greek plays ? Do you know that we are getting into the newspapers ? Do you know that people, quite famous persons, have been down to see us act ? For they are always on the look-out for local talent."

"It's the fashion now." He seemed unhappy and he kept walking about. "They come down ; they unsettle some and make others as proud as peacocks. Once, they were content to poke their noses in at our door and try to buy our old furniture. Now they're trying to buy us."

"I'm for sale." Eugenie was gay. "You may, in fact, take my ticket off, for I'm sold. Did you see a man with a sandy beard and horn spectacles in the first row last night ?"

"I was just behind him."

"He is a theatrical manager, my dear Robert, and he was enormously impressed by my acting. He thinks I can make a fortune ; in fact, he is sure. Easy as falling off this stool."

"And if you fell off that stool, you'd fall into all the muck of the smithy."

"Don't worry a comparison—and so coarsely, Robert. And, for mercy's sake, look startled—if you can ! He has offered me an engagement in his company. A provincial company ; but all the stars have started in the provinces. He will cast me for quite a small part to begin with ; but it is a tragedy part, and tragedy is my line. It is that which makes my luck ; for he says there are dozens of young comedy actresses ; you can pick them like gooseberries off a bush."

"Easier," said Robert in his silly way. "No prickles."

"How annoying you are ! He said to me behind the scenes last night, and I'm sure he was sincere—for why should a business man flatter me ?—he said that I was the artistic find of his life. So I'm going."

"Going ! Where are you going ?"

"Everywhere. Touring with his company in the provinces, to begin with. But before very long I shall have a London engagement. Of that you may be sure."

"When are you going ?"

"I'm not the prisoner in the dock, Robert ! I am going almost at once. It's the Easter vacation, as it happens ; and I simply shan't be there when the new term begins. For why should I imperil my career for a few school-children ?"

Robert looked at her upturned face, so

vivid and so artificial; he looked at her glittering eyes, so pale and blue. The home bird that he knew had flown; Eugenie was a blue and red macaw.

And he asked her, with earnest stupidity, not knowing why he was so foolish:

"Just exactly what colour is a macaw, Eugenie?"

"How on earth should I know? I can't tell the difference between that and a parrot. Why do you ask?"

"Hanged if I know why I asked." He walked away from her, looking wretched.

There swept over him, as he stood in the smithy with her, and walked away from her as far as he could, the memory of sleepy summer afternoons when he'd happened to pass up the street, and when the door of the school-house stood open. Windows open too and red geraniums in pots upon the ledge. Sometimes he had stood still, listening; not aware why. It had all been so sleepy; so young and good; safe and pleasant. He had listened to the shrill little voices and to Eugenie's voice which was so deep and sad. Yes, whatever she said, she was always sad and, in a way, profound.

Eugenie's lightest "good-bye" had the tragic finality of "farewell." And, as Robert stood outside the school-house, he would think that her voice sounded as those church bells buried at sea must sound. Mariners swore that they heard them.

Robert could think of things, as well as Eugenie could. He could think and see and feel. This made their link. Yet this morning he was stupid. The thought occurred to her that he might be jealous.

"Don't suppose," she rapped out, "that I shall ever come back. Nothing to bring me."

She looked at him searchingly with those pale blue eyes; the particular blue that glitters in the very middle of a block of ice.

(Robert thought of that too; and he could instantly visualise the cool shop of Care, the fishmonger—marble slab, block of ice in the middle—brilliant lobster or so, a plate of brown-pink shrimps—and all the rest of the fish; wet, dry, or shell.)

"Why should you come back? Wouldn't be welcome if you did."

"You've disappointed me." She stood up. "I quite thought you'd be excited. I rather hoped you'd miss me. You might at least have pretended. We've known each other all our lives and we've got, in

a sense—though it certainly seems funny—certain things in common. Good-bye."

"Don't stick out your hand, Eugenie. Can't touch it, for mine's dirty. I might miss you, if I stayed here. But I'm going away myself."

"Away, Robert! Not emigration?"

"Emigration! Why?" He was frigid; and he looked round his smithy.

"I don't know why. People do, after all. And you need not look so furious."

"They don't emigrate when they've got a good living at home and when they love their country," he told her gravely. And he looked out into the open; at the hills and the houses and at Mrs. Waghorn's red blanket flapping.

"But if you're not going abroad——"

"Didn't say I wasn't going abroad."

"Oh, well, where are you going? And why are you going? And when?"

He laughed.

"Same old game, Eugenie. Once, they came down and poked their long noses in at our door and bought our sticks of furniture; or tried to. But they'd never get a stick out of me, and father used to say that if one of those antique chaps came near his place he'd seize him by the nose with his red-hot tongs, as St. Dunstan did the devil."

Robert was laughing a little crazily. Eugenie stood in the middle of the smithy; very still and in the dramatic pose that was quite instinctive with her.

"But now"—he left off laughing—"they buy us outright; or try to. But a man's brain may strike a bargain; doesn't follow that his soul will sign."

"Is anybody trying to buy your soul, Robert?"

She was lightly contemptuous and she wondered what had happened to him. He answered irrelevantly:

"You at church on Sunday?"

"Well, of course. Don't I teach in the Sunday-school and bring the children to church afterwards? Oh, I'm so sick of children—week in and week out."

"You saw me in the choir, just as usual?"

"Saw and heard you—always do. And it is that 'just as usual,' Robert, which is driving me out of the village. Nothing ever changes in this place. You are born, you earn your living and you die. That is all."

"Pretty much the same everywhere, I reckon, Eugenie, for you can't change your fate by changing your map. Did you see

a stranger in the congregation? A fat chap in a blue suit. They showed him into the doctor's pew."

"Yes; and wasn't it a wonderful suit? Must have cost pounds; all the creases in just the right place. He looked like a tailor's dummy, and I have never understood why that should be a term of contempt; for I admire dummies."

"Sorry I'm not one," said Robert.

"Well, you certainly are not. And how about the fat man? What does he mean and why was he here? I rather wondered all through the service."

"You needn't wonder any more. He calls himself an impresario. Italian opera; that sort of thing. And he seems to have the fixed idea that I am the coming tenor. Don't laugh, Eugenie; blacksmiths are supposed to sing!"

"Oh yes, the spreading chestnut-tree—I know! But how ridiculous, Robert. He must have been having a joke with you."

"He has exactly the same sense of humour as your theatrical manager." Robert was dry and not at all offended. "He suggests taking me to Italy for training——"

"Sounds as if you were a performing animal, Robert, my dear."

She was light, but very cold. And never before had she called him "my dear."

Robert, standing near the door, square-faced, massive and blackened by his craft, stared widely.

"That hits the nail on the head, Eugenie. Singers and actors—what are they but performing animals? Showing themselves for money. Hardly seems decent to me."

She watched his rough face; she saw the honest doubt and solemn debate in his eyes. She said:

"What absurd nonsense! I believe you're joking all the time about your fat man in the blue suit."

"Are you joking about your man with the sandy beard and horn specs?"

"I never joke, Robert, but, on the other hand, I have known you to be quite waggish."

"I'm as solemn as a judge now, my dear."

He called her that "my dear" for the first time; and they looked at each deeply; in the shadowed smithy, with the hard sun and rushing wind, the flapping red blanket and the rows of yellow crocuses, all blowing and twinkling outside.

"When I am trained," said Robert, "the chap will, so he puts it, produce me. And I ought to earn as much money in six months

as I'd make here in a lifetime. He'll take a good slice of my earnings, and that's only fair. We shall have a contract. But I'm taking no risks, Eugenie. I've got a young man in my eye who will carry on the smithy for a bit, until I see which way the wind blows. If I fail as a singer, or if I feel I'd rather be a blacksmith, after all, I shall be quite content to carry on here myself again."

"That," said Eugenie emphatically, "is the difference between us. I never admit that I can fail. And, so long as I feel like that, then I shan't fail. Good-bye, Robert. And isn't it an extraordinary thing that two people in one village should become famous persons in a day and a night? Don't suppose it has ever happened before."

He laughed. He did not, she thought, take the affair with proper seriousness—and that, of course, proved that he was no artist! She unhooked the half-door and stepped out.

"Shan't I see you again, Eugenie?"

"Not until we meet in London, Robert. I shall come to the Albert Hall and hear you sing."

"No, you won't. The Opera House, please, Eugenie."

He laughed again. He watched her go, and when she was gone he moved aimlessly about his smithy; looking at everything—from the iron railing which it so delighted him to work at, to the heap of old iron implements in the corner. It was sandy-golden with rust and it comprised almost everything; from old horseshoes to pot-hooks.

It was Easter week and three years almost to the day since Eugenie had come to the smithy with her painted face and brilliant eyes.

She was walking very slowly through the larch wood that rustled upon the chalky slope of the hill just above the village. All the trees were bottle-green. It was a blowy, brilliant day, and she knew that even the allotments, if she could see them—which fortunately she could not—would be less repellent than usual. Chalk was flying like the dust of pearls up from the ploughed land. In old Mrs. Waghorn's garden crocuses grew like Maypole ribbons, and the wire clothes-line, stretched taut between two posts, was a beam of fine silver.

She stood still, looking at the village, which cuddled down there at the end of the

chalk track. It was a place discarded, yet not wholly lost. For, at least, nobody could stop you coming to the larch-wood; as often as you liked—and as often as you could run to the railway fare from London.

The wind carried to her sounds from the anvil. She wondered who was in that smithy. Who was it that blew the great bellows; blowing dust about, reddening the mass of cinders! Had Robert ever left off being a smith? She did not know, for she had left the village before he did. Or had

that one worn by the impresario, came walking jauntily through the larch-wood, with his head high and his square chin juttied out. He also was looking at the village and so steadfastly that he saw nothing of Eugenie until she jumped at him with a shrill:

"Robert!"

She had her bare fists on his breast; her pale eyes, always wildly brilliant, stared into his.

"Eugenie! What are you up to?"

"I might ask the same." She recovered.



"'You don't want to be a famous person?' 'Not a bit of it. Do you? They brought me the English papers when I was in the hospital, but I never saw your name mentioned, Eugenie.' 'You wouldn't.'"

he come back? Not once had she seen his name billed, never had she heard of him. A new tenor had certainly not splashed into that pool which is Fame. And as to pools and splashing and as to Robert hearing of her! She laughed; though it might have been a grunt or a sob—or any sound in this world which has no mirth in it. And she sat down suddenly on a flaxen tussock of dead grass into which the prevalent chalk had sifted. Her long, sad face, very fallow this morning, was turned towards the village.

Robert, in a beautifully cut suit, not unlike

He took her hands and held them. "My dear," he said with much simplicity, "my dear." He had always loved her, but until this moment he had not found it out.

She turned away; a little sullenly, so he thought. Her hands fell at her side.

"Are you going home, Robert, to the smithy?"

"Should think I am—rather. And why do you snatch your hands away?"

"Because I'd rather keep them to myself."

"Are you going home too, Eugenie?"

"Home!" She instinctively flung herself
w w

into the tragic pose which he knew so well. "Haven't got one. You know that. Never had one since Dad died, and bankrupt. Down there," she pointed to the village, "I had a bed-sitting-room. Up there—somewhere"—her hand shook widely across the hills—"in London, I mean, I live in a hostel. Very clean and comfortable; quite respectable—but not a home, my dear Robert. I only came to have a look at the village. I was a fool to come; but only a monster can remain invariably sensible. And, as we must have heaps to say, let's sit down."

They sat into the deep tussock, close together.

"Tell me," said Eugenie, in her plaintive voice and with her profound nod of the head. "I've got"—she looked at her wrist-watch—"an hour to spare before I go back to London and get ready for to-night's show."

She became violently red and he wondered why. But he started on his own tale in his downright way; there would be time for hers afterwards. One thing at a time was Robert's maxim.

"I never got so far as what you call a show, Eugenie. Fell ill soon after they'd finished training my voice. I was in the hospital at Milan for a very long time."

"What was the matter?"

"Laryngitis, to begin with; but I reckon it was home-sickness. And it got worse."

"And the impresario?"

"Wanted to back out of his bargain, and I let him."

He fell back and laughed. "If you only knew how jolly glad I was to let him!"

"You'll spoil that exquisite suit if you lie in the chalk, Robert."

"I'm going straight back," he sat up, "to take it off, put on my working clothes, my leather apron. And if I say a prayer, it will be to ask the Almighty to send Bill Tompsett along with a thoroughbred to shoe."

"You don't want to be a famous person?"

"Not a bit of it. Do you? They brought me the English papers when I was in the hospital, but I never saw your name mentioned, Eugenie."

"You wouldn't." She looked at him with extraordinary melancholy. Yet it did not follow that she was unhappy.

Eugenie loved to look sad, and it suited her. She jumped up, saying imperiously:

"Stay still; for I like to look down on you."

There was that touch of arrogance in her

voice which he knew. Once, it had stung him; but now she enchanted him, whatever she did. He could look at her and tenderly laugh at her and love her, all the time.

"I can talk better walking about." She moved. "Aren't you sorry to give Fame up?"

"Sorry! If I could only make you understand how I fretted. My head buzzed. I could see my smithy and hear it. I looked at my helpless hands and hated 'em. I thought of things. I thought, God had given me a singing pipe, same as he gives the birds. Seemed wickedness to take money for it. I was light-headed."

"Light-headed times," said Eugenie wisely, "may be the only times when we are our true selves. And, by the way, I lied to you just now, Robert. I haven't got a show to-night. I am out of an engagement for the present."

"I'm sorry," he said awkwardly.

"Good Heavens, you needn't be." She was fierce. "I'm not a failure; never have been from the first. I'm a success—as far as I go. I've had engagements all along; until this last week; and I shall get another next week, or the week after that. I've got out of the provinces. I'm acting in London. But I shall never be famous, Robert. On the other hand, I shall probably never be hard up—until I am old. By then I shall have saved a little. Or I can be a wardrobe woman at the theatre. I'm a success—as far as I go. It all lies in those words. I'm a mediocrity, my dear. But even if I were famous, I should not be satisfied; for no star ever shines brightly enough. And every star wants a sky to itself. As for the wonder and glory I used to spout about—simply not there. There is no glamour about the stage; it is just hard grind. And, however high you climb, you never get to the top—in your own estimation. I shall never be a star. I knew that in the first six weeks; didn't take me long to find my proper place. But I've studied the stars—and I believe they're more unhappy than the rank and file. For they are never satisfied, and some of us are."

"Are you satisfied, Eugenie?"

"Never mind me. And don't ask questions. And mind your own business, Robert. The stage, I tell you, is a Jacob's ladder—but the top of it isn't in heaven."

She looked fixedly down at the village and saw Mrs. Waghorn emerge from her cottage. This large old woman, with the

flowing black skirt and the black bodice buttoned to her chin, waddled down the garden between the crocuses and she hung upon the line a patchwork quilt. When it was safely pegged, Eugenie sombrely watched it flap about.

"Funny!" she said. "The one thing I've remembered most about the village was old Mrs. Waghorn hanging a red blanket out to dry, as she did that morning when I hadn't washed my face. Do you remember? And, oh, Robert, how I've wanted rain-water for my face. It has smarted so; and every time it smarts I feel sick for the village. I wish—my dear—I wish that I could sneak

down to somebody's water-tub and fill a bottle and take it back. But I should never use that water, Robert. I should keep it as something sacred. For that's the sort of fool I am—sometimes."

She tumbled suddenly beside him and he put his arm round her.

"I've got three rain-water butts, Eugenie, and they'll all be brimming this time of the year. You can empty the lot if you like."

"Are you supposed to be asking me to marry you?"

"Very glad if you'll take it that way," said Robert, speaking with a glowing staidness.

THE WILD, GLOAMING WIND.

O, WOMAN dear, when you're plying

Your needles, while the light is dying,

D' you hear how the wind is flying through the dusk of Hoodman Blind ?

Waylaying you in the shadows,

Delaying you in the meadows,

'T would stay with you and play with you,

The wild, gloaming wind.

From sordid tasks unending,

Your making and your mending,

Yourself it would be sending forth lost hopes to find :

Ere you put up your shutters

Hist, how it whistles and mutters

Where the sedge and sallow flutters in the

Wild, gloaming wind !

And maybe, 't would be taking

Hearts wounded, spirits breaking,

To soothe and lull their aching as a mother kind :

"Hush now ! For fairy portals

Unclose for day-worn mortals !

Haste you outside while those gates stand wide

In the wild, gloaming wind."

Would you tread a fairy measure ?

Find hoard of hidden treasure ?

Would you take awhile your pleasure, sweep the cobwebs from your mind ?

Leave the ceaseless round of labour ;

Vain gossip with your neighbour ;

And step out to the pipe and tabor

Of the wild, gloaming wind !

* * * * *

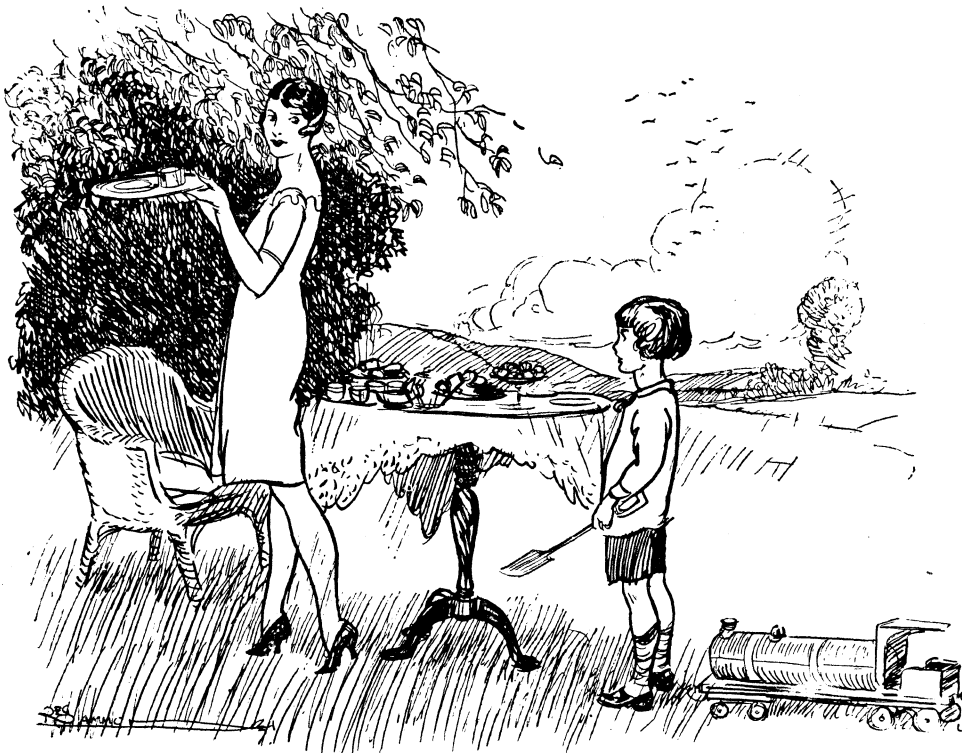
Red doors of the wood unlocking,

When the last birds home are flocking,

At your heart's door 't is knocking now,

The wild, gloaming wind !

ALICE E. GILLINGTON.



POSSIBLE WASTE.

"Come along in and be washed, Basil. I'm expecting Mr. and Mrs. Jones to tea."
 "Yes—but s'posin' they don't come?"

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

FILLING IN AN HOUR—A BRAIN-WAVE.

By John Leith.

IN Fleet-street we stood a good hour, remained before the music was due to start up in the soup-mongering palace at which we had orders to meet Mamma and lunch: Poggle and Piggle were about as manageable as a brace of young deer.

Our first few attempts to cross the road came to nothing, mainly because we did not seem able to get going together at the same time in the same direction. In the end we did the transit as a section of fours—a policeman on the left, Piggle and Poggle in the centre, Daddy on the right—all holding hands. After the policeman left they started hopping again.

I realised that bus-ing-it was not a practicable proposition. Taxi, therefore. We got a creaky, wheezy one, with a wicked-uncle sort of old boy at the helm. Poggle and Piggle believe to this day that he devours little girls. He promised to see mine didn't escape whilst I visited a tea-shop and bought four buns in two bags, two in each bag. So to the Mall, and halt near the bridge over the lake. The wicked uncle wasn't a bad chap: he took

6d. over his fare and said "Thensks." I've paid pleasanter-looking fellows more for a grunt.

Feeding the ducks was a great lark. There was one with a pink beak that kept on trying, yet was always three inches late for the bit of bun. Piggle voiced aloud her sympathy: "Look, Daddy! Those greedy ones won't let the red-nosed one have *anything*!!" Poggle, older, sensed that "nose," in this connection, was not the *mot juste*. Therefore, in a spirit of showing off, I fear, she squealed: "Oh, Piggle! You *silly*. He doesn't have a nose. That's his peck!"

Presently we had about us not only a crowd of feathered friends but also quite a gathering of human beings. I got the feeling that these latter wanted to tell me that if I were there to put my two wenches through their tricks, as an entertainment, I was not doing it at all well. So with joy I saw the last bits of bun into the water, and, thankful I had not bought twelve buns instead of only four, collected my relations and moved on.

They were relieving the sentries at St. James's Palace as we passed, and the bearskins and scarlet tunics and glittering bayonets interested us vastly. We asked many questions, were dis-



A GOOD MATCH.

"Whatever has our smart little Esmé picked up?"

"Yes! he is rather awful, isn't he? But, my dear, he matches her dog so beautifully!"



THE FISHING KIND.

TRAMP (to angler on river bank who has refused to take any notice of him): Well, mate, you ain't 'arf a stickleback for ettiket!

tressed that we were not allowed within a dozen feet of the soldiery. Even so, Daddy and at least one young guardsman were made to blush: I'm sure about the soldier, and almost sure about me.

Still half an hour before our *rendezvous* at the lunch palace. What to do? Think, think, think: joggle and tug, tug and joggle: so we stood at the bottom of St. James's Street. A few drops of rain came pitter-patter down.

Sudden surged the brain-wave—the Club should be our refuge. Poggle and Piggie could sit in the front lounge where callers are stalled. Daddy could cash a cheque, write a postcard, perhaps even snatch moments for a spot of some

quiet, a little awed by the feel of the place. It used to depress *me* in the first few years of my membership.

Daddy explained that we were on the way to Luncheon and the Zoo. The learned man at once entered upon a search of his garments, but without rending any, albeit what I should call a rough searcher. Presently, from a cigarette-case which contained Treasury notes and a fossil or two but no cigarettes, he produced tickets for the Zoo. In his anxiety to please the babies he was willing to frank Daddy into the Zoo!

Deserted by his opposite number in the bickering about the skulls, the other learned man at



THE WINTER SEASON.

ESKIMO (to his wife just before retiring for the winter season): Put the alarm on for June, dearie!

restorative, badly needed after the strain of several hours in sole command of his two small daughters.

When I say that amongst the Club's pet-names are The Mausoleum, The Parsons' Rest, and The Deserving Cases' Rendezvous, you will know at once which club it is.

The first thing that happened to us there was this. One of those learned ones who shed lustre on the place—Medecine Man, Archæolo-Geolo-Anthropolo-gist, etc., etc.—one who knows Daddy and doesn't think much to Daddy, this ancient quit a wrangle about the Piltdown and Taungs skulls in which he was engaged with another and rambled across the room to present himself to the Misses Poggle and Piggie. They were established on a couch, very solemn and

first went on talking, then took off his glasses and gave way to rage. Rage is an unwholesome indulgence for the old gentlemen of the Mausoleum, so a waiter, with great presence of mind, took him a copy of the *Looker On*, which diverted the Professor's fury.

An ex-Naval Officer, just old enough to entitle men under thirty-five to call him Sir, appeared, was introduced to the ladies. Daddy "skipped into an inner room, to inquire about a spaniel. There he found a friend, also interested in dogs, and sat with him. From time to time quite unlearned noises were wafted in from the front—"Those—ahem—babies are all right," thought Daddy, and went on sitting with that other man, like himself an ignorant, discussing dog. The noise grew and grew, the glasses were presently

empty, and Daddy returned to his offsprings.

Dignity, or dullness, is the note of the Mausoleum. Something of shabbiness in the carpets and things helps the effect. Yet there on the main staircase were the Naval Officer and those two brats busy at a bout of quarterstaff, or something of the sort. The N.O.'s walking-stick, and Daddy's, were in action, the N.O. instructing with his own and Miss Poggle learning with Daddy's, what time Sister Piggle acted as "fan." All in full view of the hall porter,

and green apples and potatoes, which things, he said, the Zoo animals really like. I remembered that they sell buns and monkey nuts in little bags round about the Zoo, but the Commander said the animals are sick to death of those things. As no doubt they are.

So my daughters were put back into their hats, patted down and tidied up, and we were in the very door-mouth when we ran into the Soldier. Demanding to be presented, he at once re-established demoralisation by foolish talk and



THERE'S NO PLEASING SOME PEOPLE.

RUSTIC: I hear that they've found coal on your land.

FARMER: Aye, an' just as I was doin' well wi' me mushrooms, too!

goggle-eyed in his box, of his various assistants looking less and less grave as the seniority descended, and of old Anthony the waiter, whose mouth had afterwards to be operated upon, to make it shut. "Forty-seven years a waiter in this street, sir!" That's old Anthony. The Misses Poggle and Piggle had got going, were well away.

Daddy recovered his stick: the quarterstaffing stopped. The N.O. announced that not only was he coming with us to the Zoo, but was returning to domicile forthwith to collect carrots

unseasonable largesse. Poggle and Piggle out of hand again. When will Sailors and Soldiers and Professors learn that the establishment and maintenance of discipline in the family circle are a male parent's principal preoccupation?

So out of the Club, by taxi to the palace where they sell soup to music, where Mamma was to meet us. We were only ten minutes late. For that I blame the Commander. He is a bachelor, which I regret: he deserves to be married. I'd like to see him with a quiverful. That would larn him to incite other men's kids into mutiny

HOME AGAIN.

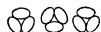
I love the sound the milkman makes
When lesser, lazier, London wakes
And sinks to sleep again,
As upward from the doorstep floats
The sound that only milkmen's throats
Are framed to utter. Sweet to lie
And listen to that dulcet cry,
All snugly coiled, with half-shut eye
Beneath the counterpane!

Oh, sweet to thrust aside the deep
Dark veils of discontented sleep,
The dreams of boat and train;
To recognize familiar things,
A mattress well equipped with springs;
A wall where no weird gardens grow;
And hear the penetrating, low,
Inimitable, true *Ku-ho*
The milkman's mellow strain!

Violet Fane.

pheasants!! How much longer do you give
the old country?"

R. H. Roberts.



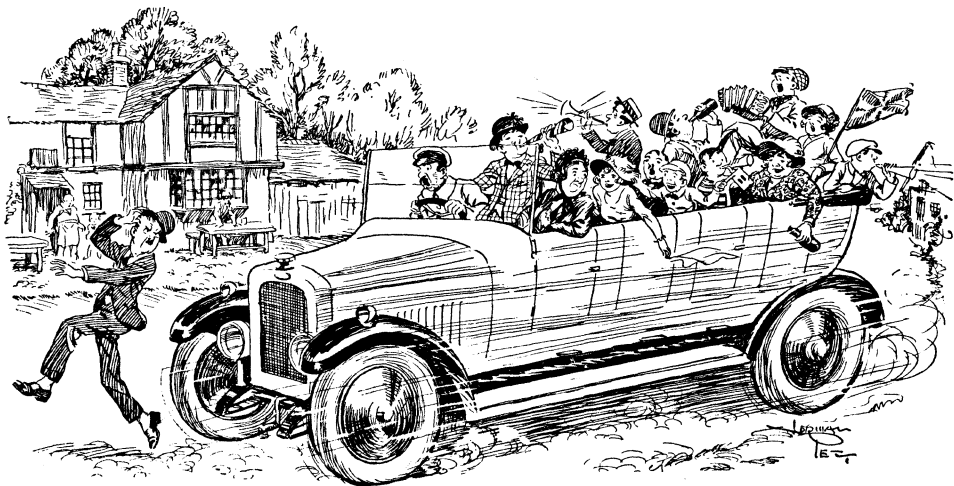
ROBERT and John, aged four and three respectively, were entertaining their mother's visitor with one of their story-books.

A picture of a cow standing in a stream came to view.

"Poor cow! Will he be drowned?" asked Robert.

"No," answered the visitor, "the water is not deep enough; besides, cows can swim, you know. Can you swim, Robert?"

Little John (with great scorn): "He's not a cow!"



THE LOST CHORD.

AGGRIEVED PEDESTRIAN: Now then—ain't you got a hooter?

ELECTRIC SHOOTING.

"THE country," said Colonel Crusher, thumping the club dining-table, "is going to the—the—ah—greyhounds! Mark my words, sir, this dashed electric business will be the ruination of England.

"I had an awful experience this autuma. A man asked me down to his place to have a pot at the pheasants. Never saw so many fine birds on the wing before. Wonderful sight; air thick with them.

"I'm a pretty good shot, but could I hit one of them? By George, sir, no! They were flying at sixty miles an hour and making a noise like aeroplanes! 'Dash it all!' I said to the man, 'where did these birds come from? Never struck this breed before.'

"'It's all right,' he said. 'Blaze away; they're electric pheasants. Much cheaper than hatching 'em out in the old way. You can use 'em over and over again.' And they call that sport, sir!

"Electric pheasants! I ask you, electric

OLD LADY: And what are you going to be when you grow up, my little man?

SMALL BOY: A Froth Blower.



"SHOULD golf matches be broadcast?" asks a headline. No, for the sake of the women and children, plus-fours should be seen and not heard.



A MAN living near Leicester has worked on the same farm for fifty-six years. It is said that he has known all the hay-wagons since they were wheel-barrows.



A MUSIC JOURNAL says that a saxophone can be played continually for fourteen hours without suffering injury. And the worst of it is most of them are.

MR. GUBBER COMPLAINS.

"JOBING gardening ain't what it was, not by a long way," said Mr. Gubber, bitterly. "People ain't content now to be guided by my advice. Why, I used to say, 'What you want in that bed is pink geraniums and a few calceies, and in this 'ere one scarlet geraniums and a nice

sick of telling 'em you can't 'ave anything but 'erbs in the 'erbashus border.

"Then there's this silly rock-garden business to grapple with. Parties who get bitten by that maggot order a couple of tons of paving stones, chuck the stuff down anyhow, and expect you to grow flowers on it. As I told one of them the



John H. Gray

NOT UP TO EXPECTATION.

AUNT: Well, Billy, what do you think of the twins?

BILLY (disappointed): Why, they are just or'nery babies—haven't got two noses or nuffin.

bit of lobelia,' and they relied on my superior knowledge.

"Now, bless yer 'art, just because they read penny gardening weeklies and bits in the Sunday papers, they think they know everything.

"Lots of old ladies I work for write out lists of plants with crackjaw names that you never hear of outside of Kew Gardens and say that's what they want in the 'erbashus border. I'm

other day, 'Give me a bit of aloovial soil and I know where I am, but I ain't a pavement artist, and if you want things to sprout on a blinkin' desert, you'd better employ a sheek.'

"It's the same with 'edges. A nice straight-forward privet 'edge clipped once a week don't give satisfaction. You'd 'ardly believe it, but while I was shingling a 'edge last week, the old boy comes out and ses, 'This is too formal for

me. I want it cut to represent birds and animals.'

" 'Well, you get on with it, guv'nor,' " I ses, 'anding him the shears. 'I don't undertake to purvide private zoos at eighteenpence an hour.' "



HER CROWNING GLORY.

(A Unionist M.P. suggests a tax on women's hats.)

These tax attacks are most unfair ;

One is suggested by a Tory

On women's hats, which—once her hair—

Are now, of course, her crowning glory :

So pretty flappers murmur that

"He must be talking through *his* hat !"

Leslie M. Oyler.

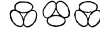


"Stop! That's terrible. I distinctly heard 'ford' and 'wood.' If you give the Company's secrets away like that passengers will never buy time-tables.

"Now listen to me—Chowow! Chanerefer Chiwo an Wush! That's the stuff!

"To-morrow there is to be a lecture on 'How to receive tips,' and the advanced luggage-smashing and trunk-battering class will be held."

R. H. Roberts.



"Is England losing its good taste?" asks a headline. Well, we have not heard of so many bites by Alsations recently.



A LAVISH PROGRAMME.

STEWARD: The second breakfast is being served now, sir.

CABIN PASSENGER: Great Scot! why, I haven't had my first yet!

PORTERS AT SCHOOL.

SCENE: Higher Training Centre for Railway Porters.

A professor is conducting a carriage-door-bang-ing class.

"No, no; that won't do. Put more beef into it. This is a railway-carriage door, not the door of a sick-room. The feeble noise you produce wouldn't disturb the nerves of a fly. Now then, once more. One, two, three, Bang! That's better. Always remember that the passenger who is too lazy to shut the door has got to be shaken up a bit.

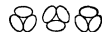
"Now for a rest we'll try calling some station names. See what you can make of this. Chug-ford! Change here for Chigwood and Wum-push!

IRATE GUARD: Why did you pull the communication cord?

CONSCIENTIOUS OLD GENTLEMAN: So sorry to trouble you, but I just remembered I didn't tip the porter at Paddington.



AN Edinburgh man recently played golf for fourteen hours on end. It is said it will take him fourteen days to tell all the stories in connection with this feat.



A MAN was found by a London policeman in the cellar of a public-house sampling the beer. Whereupon, no doubt, he hopped it!

POSTS OF HONOUR.

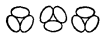
By Jack Stanton.

MANY people gazed pityingly on the small man who crouched beneath the frail wooden structure, striving vainly to obtain some shelter from the driving rain.

The day was bitterly cold, and the man's garments were painfully inadequate to form any protection from the elements. He wore no coat, and the thin "pullover" which replaced it was a poor substitute. His nether garments were of the flimsiest material, and the most casual observer could not fail to notice that his knees were exposed.

One or two people, who were standing beneath a more substantial shelter not far distant, urged the unfortunate to join them. But he paid no attention, and, with the stoicism peculiar to his class, remained in his exposed position.

The rain changed to sleet, and one occupant of the grandstand remarked to his neighbour—"There's no doubt the goal-keeper has the worst job on a day like this."

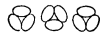


THE OPERATION.

THERE was a tense silence in the room. The little group of people sat in strained attitudes about that fateful table in the centre. Their eyes were fixed on the tall figure stooping over his work. His superb insouciance in the face of an almost impossible task gave the watchers courage and hope. Someone stirred uncomfortably in his seat and there was a low "Sh-sh!" Some of the women present were beginning to give way under the strain. There was an unnatural glitter in their eyes, their breath was coming in half-suppressed gasps, their knuckles showed white where they gripped their seats in an effort to retain control. But the man at the table seemed almost unaware of the presence of

onlookers. Quietly and efficiently he pursued his task, holding his instruments in a firm, strong grasp.

Suddenly there was a slight sound as of someone in pain. Then came a voice which brought relief and happiness to the nerve-wracked watchers. Strong and clear it sounded—"2 L.O. calling!" Uncle Alf had made the loud speaker work at last!

Jack House.

TURNING THE TABLES.

LANDOWNER (to trespassing tramp): Can't you read?
TRAMP: Wot do you think you are—a H'education H'officer?

A MEDICAL expert reports that the House of Commons is practically germ-proof. So what appear from the Strangers' Gallery to be microbes must be Members of Parliament.



A CUSTOMER refused to pay his bill at a London restaurant recently because the coffee looked like mud. But surely all coffee is ground?



VISITOR: Have you lived here all your life?
SMALL GIRL: No, not yet.

NIGHT WATCHES.

Awake I lie, though I've no cause to worry.

Try as I will I cannot even doze;

In vicious circles vague forebodings hurry,

A curious sense of lacking looms and grows.

I punch my pillow, toss from left to right

All through the sad, still watches of the night.

Bill—my fiancé—does he love me really?

Well, yesterday, without sufficient cause

He wrangled, and behaved a little queerly,

While I retorted with a show of claws.

Yet, in the end, he hugged me to his breast—

Oh, Bill's all right, but yet I cannot rest.

An astronomer declares that Mars is now in the state that our earth was 34,000,000 years ago. Those who can let their minds go back that number of years will realise what this means.



A CAT imprisoned in a well near Hitchin attracted rescuers by its cries. A sort of get mea-ow-t!



NO ALTERNATIVE.

AUTHOR (at first performance of his play, which is being booted by the house): Good heavens! I shall have to boo too, or they'll find out that I wrote it.

No doubt he did disturb my peace of mind

By tersely giving me a piece of his;

Still, neither to the other's faults is blind,

Our au revoir found comfort in a kiss.

It isn't that—yet soon the dawn will peep!

What *is* the reason that I cannot sleep?

Then, all at once, amid the still night watches,

I miss a tiny sound I always hear—

Sit up, and reaching over for the matches,

The cause of my insomnia is clear!

Sleep comes at last, I drain the poppy cup—

My still night watch—I *never wound it up!*

Jessie Pope.

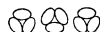


"WANTED, Two good Red Brickmakers," says an advertisement. More Communism!

CLARA: What are you so furious about?

ANNE: Daisy called me an old cat!

CLARA: Why, you're not so old as all that.



DR. E. C. BRAMER says that talkative wives are worse than any other kind. Are there any other kind?



"WHAT'S your husband's trade, Mrs. Jones?"

"He's a blower."

"Oh, yes,—glass, froth or organ?"

Is this YOUR domestic Balance Sheet?

Just study these two little
sums and see—

No. 1

Value of Furniture . . .	£1,000	Insured against Fire for . .	£1,000
That's all right if you have a Fire.			

.....

No. 2

Reasonable provision for your family, say five years' salary at £800 per annum.	£4,000	Insured for	£750
		Debit balance to be faced by wife and family	£3,250

.....

DO YOU know how they are going to meet this debit balance?

IT is hardly fair they should have to face it. But if you are 34 next birthday, £104 os. 8d. a year will insure your life for £4,000 with profits, in the Prudential, and leave them protected for an ever-increasing amount. For instance, at the present rate of bonus—£2 4s. per cent. per annum—your policy would be worth £6,640 in 30 years' time.

*Look at these sums again
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P.P.57.

RATHER BLIGHTY.

By K. H. S.

"WHAT does one do for blighted chrysanthemums?" called Betty anxiously, from the garden.

"Betty, my child, your language—" I began.

"Oh, don't be silly!" she interrupted, "I don't mean what you mean; when I say blighted—"

"You mean something much worse, I suppose?"

"I mean blighted," said Betty firmly. "And if you still don't understand, come down here and look at the blight."

"Blighters!" I corrected.

blight. The poor darlings are my precious chrysanthemums."

"I don't see any," I remarked, looking all round the garden.

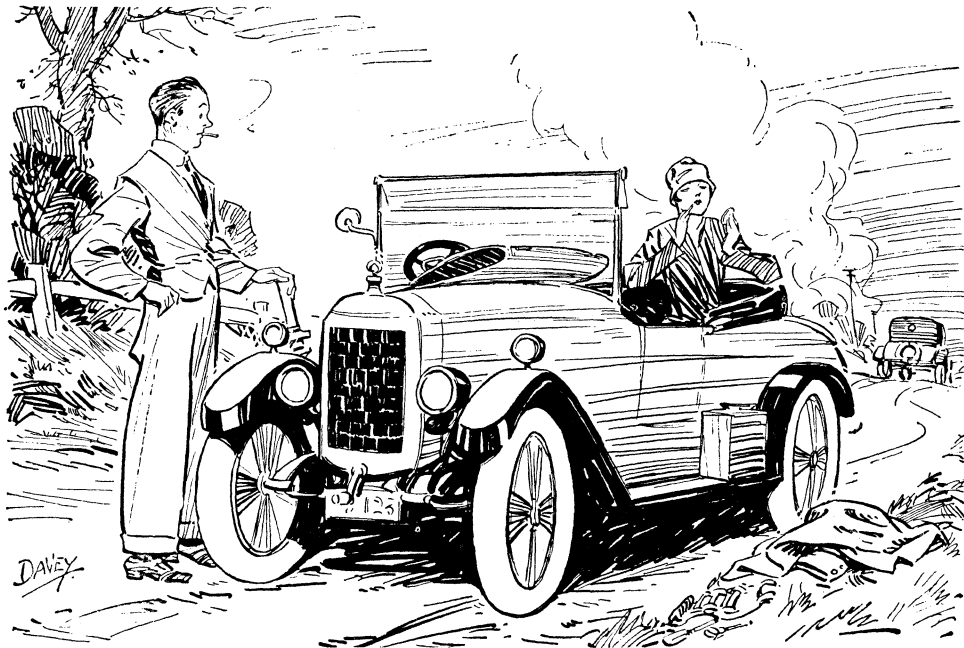
"These are chrysanthemums, of course, under the blight," explained Betty. "What I want to know," she continued, "is how to get rid of them."

"I understood you liked chrysanthemums," I murmured.

"Stupid!" exclaimed Betty. "I am talking about the blight, not the chrysanthemums."

"Oh," I said, enlightened at last, "that's easy. Pick them off!"

"One by one, I suppose, when there are hundreds and dozens of them," was the scorn-



WAYSIDE REPORTEE.

THE LAD (the car having stopped for the fifth time): I thought so! There's something wrong with the engine!

THE GIRL (surprised): Oh—has it GOT an engine?

"No, blight!" insisted Betty.

"Breakfast is ready," I called hopefully, trying to change the subject, but breakfast had lost its charm for one.

"Not until you've seen this blight," came the reply, and I knew escape was impossible. I joined Betty among the flower-beds.

"Well, where are the blighters—I mean, where is the blight?"

"Look at the poor darlings!" she wailed, pointing to thick clusters of black insects, clinging to the tops of some straggly, greenish plants.

"I should scarcely describe them as darlings, but they look very comfortable," I consoled her.

"Stupid creature!" she said impatiently.

"These are the blight—I mean that is the blighters—no—" carefully this time, "That is

ful retort. "Perhaps you'd like to begin?"

"Not at all," I contradicted politely. "I am no gardener, as you know, but I enjoy looking on."

"Slacker!" scoffed Betty scornfully. "Well, I shall call on Shrubbs this morning, and ask his advice. We need some flowers for the house, anyway."

"For goodness' sake come and have some breakfast," I begged. "I don't mind blighted chrysanthemums, even when they involve a visit to the most expensive florist in the neighbourhood, but a ruined breakfast is more than I can bear."

"Some people never think beyond their food."

"That is better than blighters, anyway," I retorted.

"Hush!" said Betty, looking in alarm at the

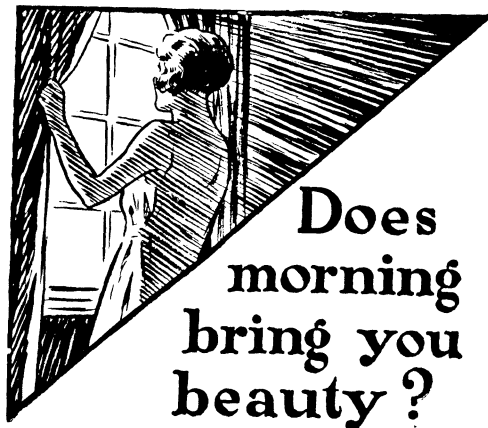
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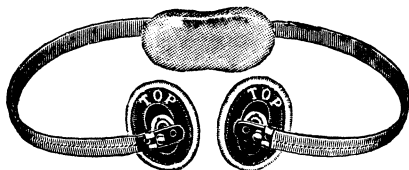
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windows next door. "People will think you said 'bloaters,' and they are so vulgar! Come inside, do!"

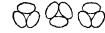


A BEE expert declares that some bees have 13,800 eyes. Fitting a near-sighted bee with 6,900 pairs of horn-rimmed glasses must be a ticklish job.



A NUMBER of herrings without tails have been caught off Plymouth. Manx cats must look to their laurels.

RECENT experiments have proved that flies will not consume castor oil. We don't blame them.



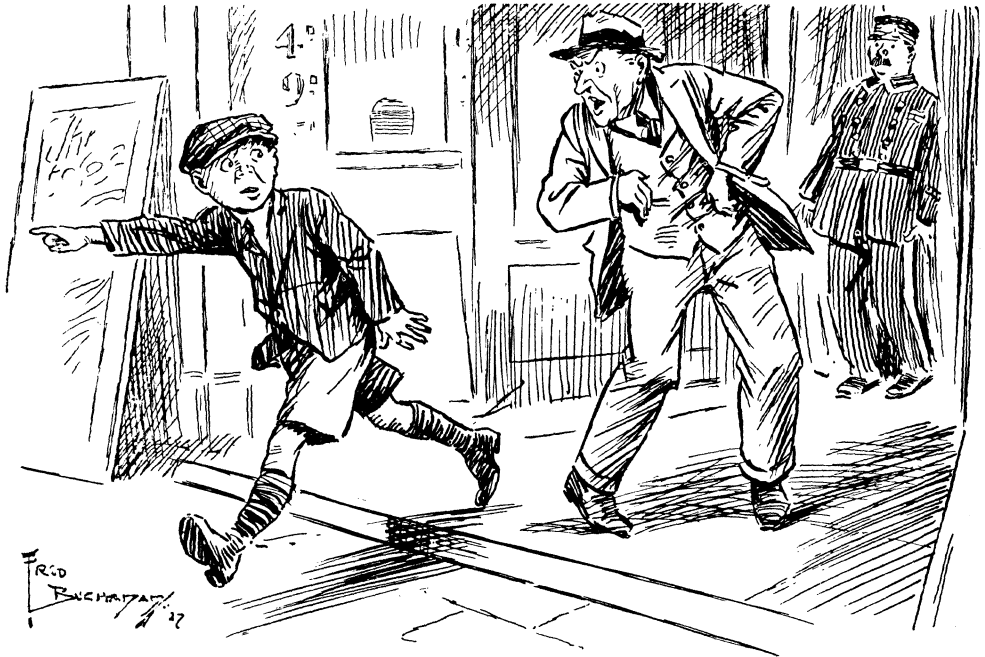
"WOULD you like to buy me a pair of ear-rings, dear?"

"Don't you know that the latest Parisian fashion is to wear one ear-ring only?"

"Yes, but you must have a spare part."



AN apartments-to-let advertisement offers "Bed—part board." We know that bed.



MORE HASTE LESS SPEED.

Jock (urgently called out of cinema in a case of illness at home): Dinna be in sic a hurry—ah'm forgettin' ma pass-oot check!

"I HAVE decided not to bathe during my stay here."

"Oh, why?"

"The bathing attendant is wearing too many medals for life-saving to please me."

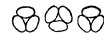


A SCIENTIST states that fish can articulate. It may be so, but we have never found our goldfish very chatty.



AN automatic plough has been invented which will work without a man's guidance. A lawn-mower constructed on similar lines would meet a long-felt want.

AUNT JANE, who has been reading about the new craze, astonished a waiter recently by asking for jugged electric-hare.



IN answering some test questions a Surrey schoolboy stated that when old enough he would like to be a tax-collector.

This sounds like the old pirate craving in a modern form.



YOUNG MAN (taking singing lessons): Do you think I can use my voice in public now?

DOWNHEARTED TUTOR: Yes, I expect so; try cheering at a football match.

OCT 27 1927

THE NOVEMBER. WINDSOR



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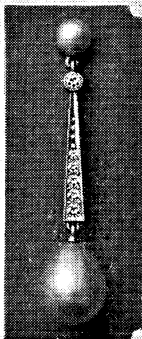
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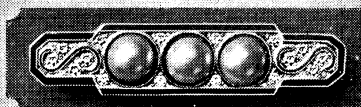
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Rings with selected Ciro Pearl, set with scientific Diamonds on platinette. Gold shank. £1 1 0 each.



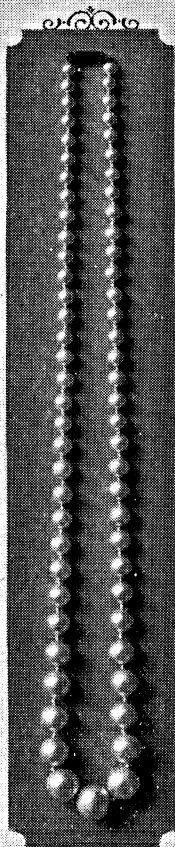
4010. Two lustrous Ciro Pearls on scientific Diamond-studded bar. £1 1 0

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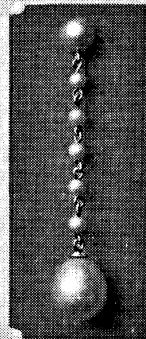


4034. Three selected Ciro Pearls, mounted with scientific Diamonds in enamel border. £1 1 0

£1 1 0



Reduced photo of Ciro Pearl Necklet, 16ins. long, £1 1 0
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64.

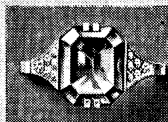
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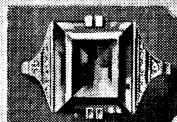
Selected Ciro Pearls on platinette chains. The Drop Pearl may be either pear-shaped or round. £1 1 0 per pair.

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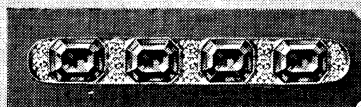
598.

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731. Selected Ciro Pearl on platinette bar, studded with scientific Diamonds. £1 1 0

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The Windsor Magazine.

No. 395.

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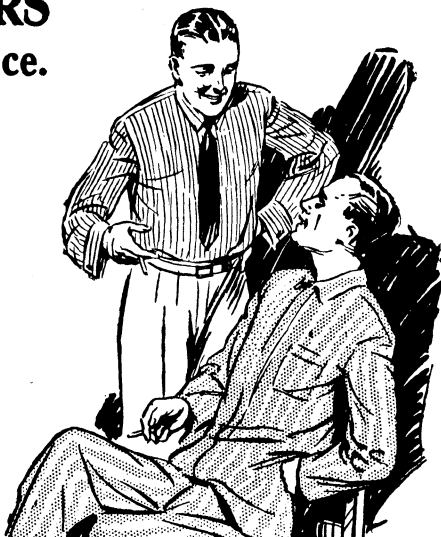
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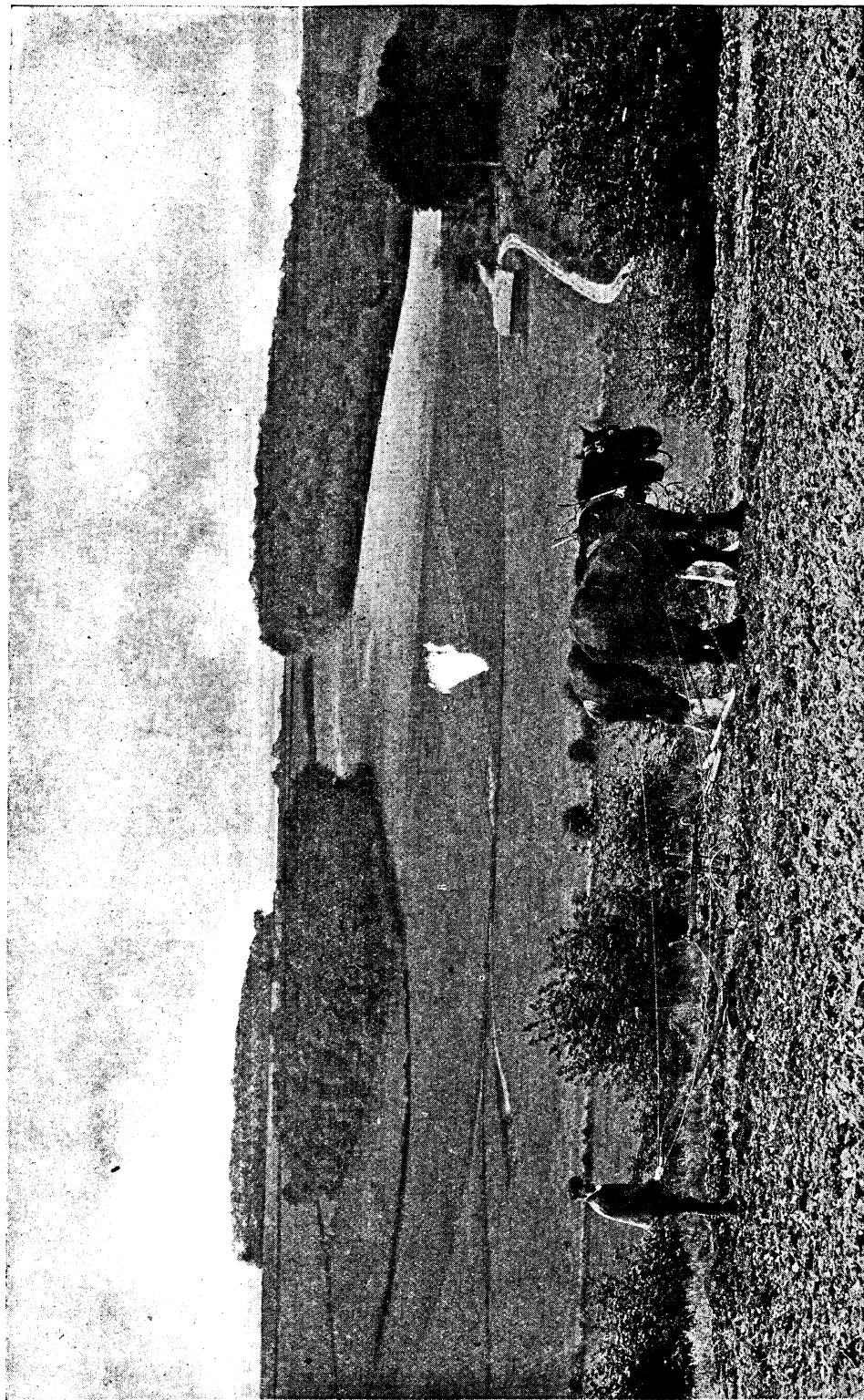
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A HERTFORDSHIRE VALLEY.
From a Photographic Study by J. T. Newman.



"If you don't mean this place to crash, Chandler ol' boy, you must increase your accommodation."

⊙ A NIGHT ⊙ TO REMEMBER

By STEPHEN McKENNA

⊙ ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK ⊙

"I AM always interested," murmured old General Finch, as I motored him to London after a week-end party at Mornington, "to observe that desperation, which might be expected to render a man humble, in England always seems to make him arrogant."

"I suppose this is aimed at me," grunted "Cork" Chandler.

"I was generalizing," said Finch. "Every incompetent army officer imagines himself fit to be secretary of a big London club. Women who are useless for anything else are always ready, in England, to teach. Now, your young Scot, when he wants to raise the wind, goes to work on a farm for a few months; your young American girl takes a

job as a holiday waitress in Maine or Florida . . ."

"Because it's all they're fit for," interrupted Chandler, nicknamed "The Cork" for a reason that is self-evident to his friends. "If I haven't made money in the last ten years, I've bought a deal of experience. I'm going to cash that in now with this cabaret. And I'm going to make a success of it. If my friends will help me," he added, looking round the car

"I'm taking no shares," I said.

"The utmost I ask of you," "The Cork" returned, "is that you devote three minutes to the little prospectus I was circulating this week-end. Then—if you feel justified, but not otherwise—I want you to talk about the

place to your friends. And, whether they are interested or not, I want you all to give me a good show on the opening night. The Sefton Sisters are doing a turn; Michael Beardsley is going to sing; and I've secured the services of the Memphis Minstrels. All you fellows have to do is to occupy a table and pretend you're not too devastatingly bored. Support me that far; make it a night to remember; and my success will be assured. If *this* is 'arrogance' . . ."

General Finch extracted "the little prospectus" from his pocket and affected to study it with new interest. I have no doubt he was feeling, as I felt, that it would be hard to refuse an invitation to dine, at "Cork" Chandler's expense, making up our own parties, on one night of our lives. We could join in the dancing, or we could look on. We could stay for the cabaret-show, or we could leave early. And we need never come again.

"I'm not wholly ignorant of food nor wholly indifferent to wine," "The Cork" continued, after allowing time for his exordium to sink in. "And, when I tell you that Aristide has thought fit to come to me from the Grand Kasbah Hotel, I fancy you can be easy in your stomachs. The best food and wine, however, won't make a new cabaret go if two-thirds of the tables are empty. And people are most miserably conservative! If you always go to the Kasbah, it needs a depth-charge to shift you over to another place."

"How many can you seat?" asked General Finch, still playing for time.

"Just short of three hundred. There are fifty tables for two, twenty-five for four and twelve for eight."

We nodded over his figures until the silence grew embarrassing.

"Well, I suppose you may as well put me down for an eight-table," I sighed.

"I'll make myself responsible for a four," added the general.

"Cork" Chandler thanked us and at once plunged into a sea of calculations that kept him occupied till we arrived in London.

II.

WHEN I came to send out my invitations, the first person to be secured, I felt, was Olive Wessday. "Cork" Chandler had hinted that he would like her to be asked; but, as he would be far too busy on the opening night to have a party or even to dine by himself, I was made responsible for providing a seat from which Olive could watch the

spin of the wheel that was to bring ruin or riches to the sanguine proprietor of "Chandler's Cabaret". "*I should love to come,*" Olive wrote, "*though it will be a nerve-racking business. If Corky makes a success of this, we may conceivably be able to marry in about fifty years' time . . .*"

Of my other guests I need say no more than that they all accepted. The advance press-work for "Chandler's Cabaret" had been well done: there were mysterious messages in the "personal" columns of the daily papers, intriguing photographs of Michael Beardsley, the Sefton Sisters and Chandler himself in the illustrated weeklies, and ingenious paragraphs in theatre-programmes.

"I've written a personal letter to every first-class passenger on every Atlantic liner for the last month," "The Cork" told me, as we waited for the first parties to arrive. "And I've canvassed every American visitor at the Kasbah and every other big hotel . . ."

"Do the big hotels like that?" I asked. "I should have thought you were rather cutting into their custom."

"It's to their interest that their patrons should be kept amused. The people at the Kasbah were the hardest to win over . . ."

"I suppose they didn't like your stealing Aristide," I suggested.

"They didn't like Aristide's saying that this was the place of the future. The new manager means to shew that the Kasbah is bursting with life. Well, that's all right so long as he doesn't try to cramp my style, but I caught him trying to put people off coming here. That had to be stopped! I went to the directors, who are friends of mine, and convinced them that each of us stood to put business in the way of the other. You see, we don't open till the evening; so I'm telling all my clients that the Grand Kasbah Hotel is the place for luncheon. And, as the Kasbah does no supper trade, I've had leave from the directors to put cards on all the tables there, urging *their* clients to come on to Chandler's later. The Sefton Sisters are making a table-to-table canvass there this evening, with personal invitations to all the theatre people. By the way, I don't want to be inhospitable, but I'd take it kindly if you could give up your table soon after eleven. I've spoken to old Finch and a few more . . ."

He excused himself, as the head-waiter hurried up to say that he was wanted on the

telephone. So far was I from charging "The Cork" with want of hospitality that I grasped at the chance of escaping before this "night to remember" lengthened into a night and morning that I should be long unable to forget. I am not fond of hot rooms or late hours; I would always rather eat a cutlet in a private house than caviare and ortolans in public; and I lack the restlessness or the curiosity or the enterprise that drives so many people to attend first nights at theatres or to devour new novels on the day of publication. As I watched for my guests, I saw the faces of men, otherwise unknown to me, who seemed to pass their lives on the threshold of an early door. They had applied for tables within an hour of receiving "The Cork's" first circular; and, as they stared critically about them, I felt that they were comparing this cabaret with the other dozen which they had patronized on their opening nights; they were weighing the Sefton Sisters against the Trix Sisters and the Duncan Sisters; they were scrutinizing their fellow-diners to see whether "Cork" Chandler had attracted the right "cabaret-crowd". From time to time their faces lightened as they recognized adventurers of their own kidney; from time to time they whispered together, as though they felt that staid old gentlemen like Finch or John Mornington or Charles Downside or myself had come to the wrong place and were likely to cast a shadow on their merry-making.

Then I heard my name spoken and found Olive Wesdray advancing on me with "The Cork", whose spirits appeared to be bobbing up and down like the irresponsible substance from which he took his nickname.

"They mean to smash us!" he was telling Olive in one breath; and in the next: "But I'll smash them before they smash me!"

"Who is smashing or being smashed?" I enquired.

"The Kasbah gang," "Cork" Chandler answered. "I've just had a telephone-message from Edna Sefton that this jackanapes of a new manager is forbidding them to do the table-to-table canvass I told you about. I fancy our friend will find he's gone too far. I have the permission of his directors, in writing. I've told him very plainly that, if he doesn't get out of the way, I'll report him and have him out in the street . . ."

Olive Wesdray clapped her hands in noiseless delight:

"Well done, Corky! What did he say to that?"

"There wasn't much he *could* say," answered "The Cork", as though the matter were finished.

It has never been my lot, I humbly thank heaven, to run a restaurant or a cabaret; I was unacquainted even with the name of the Grand Kasbah Hotel's new manager; and, as my tribute to friendship was being paid in this unwanted party, I felt that "Cork" Chandler's triumphs and tribulations were wholly his own affair. If I must find a reason for interfering, I believe it was Olive Wesdray's almost pathetic anxiety for the success of "The Cork's" latest gamble. His friends at that moment were her friends, his quarrels were her quarrels; and, as her shining eyes met mine after that "Well done, Corky!", I felt she was promising him that, if anyone had to be "smashed", he could count on us to help.

"You think he'll give no more trouble?" I asked.

My last wish was to provoke discord, but I have had as much experience as most men of the conflicting justifications that follow an exchange of bad temper. "The Cork", in telling the new Kasbah manager to obey his directors' orders on pain of dismissal, had not ingratiated himself with his rival. I was ready to bet the price of this dinner that the manager would continue on his course of obstruction, that Chandler and the Sefton Sisters would lodge a complaint next day with the directors and that the consequent enquiry would be lost to sight in a fog of cross-swearing. The manager, as likely as not, would say that some of the residents had objected to being pestered by these girls and that he had asked them to stop in the interests of his business. To such a story neither Chandler nor the directors could make any reply.

"It depends whether he wants to find himself out of a job to-morrow," "The Cork" answered truculently.

"You may be sure," I said, "that he won't override his directors' orders without a plausible defence. If you make it clear beforehand that you have their authority . . ."

"The Cork" pondered my advice for a moment, then threw me a quick nod of gratitude.

"I'll send him the letter to read," he promised. "Michael Beardsley will take it round. And I'll make him responsible for seeing that the Sefton girls are not inter-



ferred with." As the line of comedy by which Beardsley has won the hearts of the music-hall public consists chiefly in his being picked up and thrown about the stage by any man or woman an inch his superior, I could not help smiling at the idea of his protecting himself or anyone else from interference. "The Cork" must have seen my smile. "Michael was a featherweight boxer," he informed me grimly, "before he went on at the halls."

III.

ANY counsels of peace that I felt inclined to offer were cut short by the arrival of my other guests; and for the next half-hour, somewhat with a feeling that I was in a studio and that an unseen operator was pre-

paring a film, I played my part as a jovial, slightly abandoned pleasure-seeker. At a nod from Chandler I swallowed a cocktail and looked on enviously as General Finch poured his into a palm-tub. I accepted a gardenia from the head-waiter. On slight pressure I would have pulled a cracker with Aristide and assumed a paper cap.

When my technique failed through want of experience, I had the example of the seasoned "cabaret-crowd" to keep me straight: it was the mode, I found, to become archly hilarious when the champagne was opened and to address Aristide as "Georges". I did my best, examining my watch at long intervals only, and trying not to derive malicious comfort from the knowledge that, little as I was enjoying myself, General Sir Knot-



"On reaching the entrance to the restaurant, they stopped short as though they had blundered into a funeral."

leigh Finch and the Most Noble Marquis of Downside were enjoying themselves even less.

When the magnetism of Chandler's eye was withdrawn, I tried to modify my unreal transports; but in Olive, I found, he had left behind him an untiring task-master.

"You're going to dance this with me," she announced, as the Memphis Minstrels settled into their gallery and saluted us with a saxophone broadside.

"I have not danced," I replied, "since I took part in a Sir Roger de Coverley at the end of a hunt-ball half a generation before you were born."

"We must give the others a lead," she explained, standing up. "Corky has packed his jury a bit too much; and the cabaret-crowd is beginning to look rather suspicious. Most of us aren't known by sight; and, though you and a few others are doing wonderfully, you can't say that people like the General are pulling their weight."

A passing glance at the unhappy Finch hardly disposed me to say anything.

"I know I'm a deadhead," I replied, "but I might conceal it if you didn't insist on exposing me in public."

"It's only to get things going," Olive whispered appealingly. "My dear, it means so *much* to Corky and me! There! As soon as we stood up, the others began to stand up too!"

Screened by the indifferent backs of dancers who were far too much concerned with the epileptic movements of their own feet to watch what was happening to mine, I shuffled half-way round the room and only stopped when "Cork" Chandler darted from behind a pillar and plucked at my sleeve.

"That's the style!" he whispered. "Get 'em worked up; and they'll want to go on dancing all night. My cabaret-show looks like falling through."

"What's happened?" asked Olive.

"Dolly Sefton's in hysterics; and Edna's in such a tearing rage that I don't believe I shall ever get her here. I tell you, I hung up the receiver for fear of being electrocuted!"

"But what's happened?" Olive repeated.

I saw "The Cork's" fingers moving as though he wanted to get them on someone's throat.

"That little swine at the Kasbah," he whispered fiercely. "I sent Michael Beards-

ley round with the directors' letter ; and the manager had the cheek to say he must use his own discretion. When people came to a quiet hotel, he said, they didn't want to be bothered by a pack of chorus-girls . . . Chorus-girls, mark you ! Our little Michael happens to be rather fond of Dolly Sefton ; and, as I'd said he was to take the girls under his charge, he didn't waste any time arguing. The manager has a black eye and a broken nose to remind him of his manners, but that didn't prevent the most almighty scene. . . ."

As Chandler paused to fan himself, I took occasion to say that I hoped his own name would not be connected with the affray.

"I haven't bothered to think about that," answered "The Cork". "I suppose there'll be a summons against Michael. Three or four tables were knocked over ; and the floor was swimming with soup and champagne. Michael has a cut lip and a broken tooth. He won't be able to appear to-night. Not that he cares ! He's done in that little jack-in-office. And I should think he's done in the Grand Kasbah Hotel. Well, our friend has only himself to thank, but I'm more than doubtful whether the Seftons will appear to-night. That's why you must keep things going. If people get dancing seriously, they won't miss the cabaret-show, they won't want it, they'd resent it. I'm just going to lubricate the Memphis Minstrels." . . .

IV.

ONCE again I did my best.

Is it cynical to believe that the world would be a better place if fewer people tried to do good ? And yet, when Chandler urged his friends to "keep things going", what were we to do ? Swollen with his meat and wine, how could we refuse ?

Strictly speaking, I have misused the word "swollen", for at the point which I have now reached I had consumed only a cocktail and a slice of melon. The soup which was to follow the melon I could see steaming over a spirit-burner on a wagon by my deserted chair ; and I do not hesitate to say that the bored alien in attendance could not have been more eager to serve than I to eat it. My watch, however, was marking nine o'clock before Olive let me return ; and, when I reached my table, the single inhabitant was an undersized stranger entrenched behind a cigar and a glass of champagne.

"This your joint ?" he enquired affably, scattering ash over the neighbouring plates. "Turn me out when your bunch gathers

round. Corks told me to have a drink ; and this seemed a likely spot."

While I pondered an appropriate rejoinder, Olive darted forward with outstretched hand, exclaiming "Michael !" ; and from his cut lip and displaced mouth I realized that I was face to face with the redoubtable Beardsley, knockabout comedian and featherweight boxer.

"Well, well, well !" he cried. "This is an evening I shan't forget in a hurry ! Has Corks told you about the rough house at the Kasbah ? Best thing of its kind I've seen for twenty years. And the cream of it is that it'll be the making of this place ! Providential ! Not one of those people will go near the old Kasbah again ! I heard 'em saying so ; and, when Dolly Sefton was through with her hysterics, I told her to strike home. Fix your sweetest smile, I said. They're all on your side, I said. And round she went, apologizing for being the innocent cause and so forth and handing out her tracts about this place. These people had to dine somewhere ; and this is where they're coming to dine. You can see 'em ! There's old Charles Memling and Dot Field. Admiral Stanlyre. Lady Coolidge. Well, well, well . . . If Corks can play his cards properly, this place is made."

Converging from different corners of the room, my party was at last returning to its interrupted dinner. Michael Beardsley finished his wine and left us with a smile and a wink. I shook his hand, in passing, with some inarticulate feeling of gratitude to the man who had dispensed me from further effort. That Chandler's fortune was made mattered less to me than that I could finish my dinner in peace. The polished oblong of dance-floor was crowded ; the tables were packed ; and the narrow entrance-hall was (I should have said, uncomfortably) congested. Hardly had the tall swing-doors shut on one party before they opened to admit another ; and Aristide's high, scholarly forehead was glistening as he scattered his welcomes.

"I congratulate you !" I said to Olive.

"Success may sometimes be *too* complete," she answered uneasily. "If these people had come on for supper, there'd have been room ; but it's dinner they want and they want it now. We mustn't let them go off saying that Chandler's Cabaret is hopeless because you can never get a table. Can't you ask our waiter to be a bit quicker ?"

I looked at my watch. I reached for the menu. I shook my head. With the excep-

tion of Olive, my guests did not know that they were helping to advertise the opening night of "The Cork's" last gamble; and I saw no reason to enlighten them.

"Unless we cut the dinner to pieces—which won't impress our friends favourably—," I told Olive, "we shall not have finished for another forty minutes at least; and by that time these people in the hall must have died or gone elsewhere. With the utmost desire to oblige 'The Cork', I can hardly send my party home after the soup."

Whether she agreed or not, Olive did not repeat her appeal; and I had consumed a slice of toast almost without interruption and had seen a steaming portion of lobster set in front of me before I was called away again. The disturber this time was once more "Cork" Chandler, by now looking agitated and begging me to interview the representative of the *Daily Post* on his behalf.

"You can say there's been such a rush of business that I can't spare a moment for anyone," he coached me. "The success of this evening has been beyond my wildest dreams. People have been turned away in droves. Intending visitors to the most popular cabaret in London will be well advised to book their tables early in order to avoid disappointment. Negotiations are in progress for certain of the neighbouring premises. The dance-floor is not unjustly described as the best in England. So well patronized was it on the opening night that the cabaret entertainment which had been advertised and which included special songs by Mr. Michael Beardsley and dances by the Sefton Sisters had to be postponed. The utmost credit is due to Mr. Chandler . . . But you can leave *him* to put in that sort of thing," "The Cork" added with belated modesty. "If he asks any questions about the row at the Kasbah, you can say quite truthfully that you weren't there and that you know nothing. What Michael may have told you isn't evidence. Come along!"

And so, with Olive's soft eyes smiling on me in gratitude and with an encouraging slap from "The Cork" still warming my shoulder-blades, I surrendered my lobster to the hot-plate which had so patiently cherished my soup and strode unfalteringly to the private office for the first and, I hope, the last press interview of my life.

V.

My unhesitating conviction, as I shook hands with the representative of the *Daily Post*, was that he had been dining.

In reaching this conclusion I did not need his admission that he was the guest of the management and would therefore say what he could in favour of the *cuisine*; nor was I prejudiced by his persistence in calling me "Chandler ol' boy" when I had explained that I was—for the nonce—Mr. Chandler's mouthpiece. I state what I believe to be a fact, without comment. I shall not be censorious over the young man's intemperance. I was there, in the manager's office, smoking a cigar when I was craving for a single plate of solid food, to do what I could for "The Cork". Once again and for the last time I did my best.

As I have never before been interviewed, I cannot say whether it is usual for the reporter or his victim to do most of the talking, but in the presence of the *Daily Post* representative I sat silent for ten minutes of his unbroken volubility.

"Well, Chandler ol' boy," he began amiably, "I expect you'd like hear what I think your show. I've no fault find with wine, food, no fault 't all. Service? So-so. What's going break you—and I don't see how I can 'void saying it—is your 'commodation . . ."

I tried to interpose that my friend Chandler contemplated acquiring the premises adjoining, but the representative of the *Daily Post* continued to talk on without heeding me.

"No good collecting people here if there's no room for them when they come!" he upbraided me. "No good laying on Sefton Sisters if no one can see them! No good bucking about your cellar and your kitchen if people can't get anything to eat or drink. And that's what's been happening to-night. I've no doubt you're going to tell me that an opening night's 'ceptional, but that's no comfort to people who are still hanging about at ten o'clock, waiting for their dinner and unable to get a chair to sit down on. No good telling people to book tables unless you tell other people that the place is full. I suppose this gang," he went on, waving a scornful hand towards the restaurant, "*did* book in advance; and I must say, Chandler ol' boy, that you admitted 'em without using much 'scrimination. Now, it's part of my job to know people, but I give you my word that, when I came in, four-fifths of your clients were people I'd never set eyes on before. Where you got 'em I can't imagine. Most of them looked like old uncles and aunts from whom you had expectations; and the rest were like people who'd been kind to

you the last time you were in Southport. A family party for Christmas is one thing, but the opening night of a slap-up new cabaret is something quite different."

Perhaps I was ruffled at being likened to some rich provincial relation of Chandler's, perhaps I was merely irritable from hunger. I took occasion to say that it did a restaurant no harm to draw its patrons from more than one class.

"Quite, quite, quite, quite, quite!" the young pressman assented rapidly. "Good thing to shew grandmama she can come here without being compromised. All I'm saying, Chandler ol' boy, is that we don't want too *many* grandmamas. They won't have time to come more than once or twice before they fall to pieces from old age; and it's a pity to clutter up the place with them if it means turning away the solid people who come to a show of this kind five nights out of seven. I know I'm right, ol' boy. When I'd finished my dinner, I drifted about to hear what people were saying. I did what I could for you. I praised the decoration; I told them you'd been out yourself to Tennessee to collect the Memphis Minstrels; I begged 'em not to miss the Newburg lobster. 'Miss it?' they said. 'We've been here forty minutes without getting more than the smell of other people's food. We're off.' Chandler ol' boy, if that was said to me once, it was said a dozen times. Joker Chudleigh was the first; and he'd brought a likely-looking party of seven. Bat Wilson was the next. Then the Spanish fellow with the comic name. I gather that there'd been some kind of row at the Kasbah; and they'd all walked out as a protest. When I heard that, I felt it was going to be the making of your place, but I'm not sure now that the Kasbah row hasn't done you more harm than good. You know what people are like when they're hungry . . ."

"I do," I put in bitterly.

"They can't see why other people should be eating and drinking in comfort while they're out in the cold and starving. It didn't make things any sweeter for them when they saw the kind of deadheads who were already in possession. Where you *found* them . . . When the music began, I heard one old boy saying that he hadn't danced since the jolly old Sir Roger de Coverley days!"

I looked closely at the *Daily Post* reporter, but could detect no malice in his flabby expression of vinous affability.

"I understand you wanted to make an

interview of this," I said. "If you have any questions . . ."

"I don't think I have," answered the young pressman, yawning and rising unsteadily to his feet. "I just wanted to tip you the wink. If you don't mean this place to crash, Chandler ol' boy, you must increase your accommodation. I've no fault to find with the catering. The service will improve, no doubt, but it's making fools of people to get 'em here and send 'em away empty . . ."

As my companion's discourse seemed to have completed a circle and to be starting again, I made an excuse to go back to the restaurant. My party, I found, was wrestling with marrow-bones; and Olive Westray explained that in my absence our waiter had really tried to make up for lost time. My lobster, certainly, had been cleared away; and, when I enquired into the fate of my *poussin*, my *flageolets* and my *soufflée*, the waiter expressed his lack of comprehension in more languages than I could understand. I was sending for Aristide when Olive checked me.

"It was Corky's idea," she whispered. "If we could give up this table to some of the Kasbah people . . . Dolly Sefton has come here after all. And Michael is going to sing his first song at half-past eleven, cut lip and all. I call it frightfully sporting of him. The least *we* can do . . ."

"But isn't it too late?" I interrupted.

Sitting on my left and backing the room, poor Olive had failed to see or hear the change that had overtaken it while I was closeted with the representative of the *Daily Post*. The narrow hall, packed full half-an-hour since, was now deserted; the survivors of the "cabaret-crowd" were calling for their bills with a disgust which they did not try to conceal; and of "The Cork's" personal bodyguard a good half had obeyed his injunctions by retiring early and leaving their tables to late arrivals who for one reason or another failed to arrive. Those who remained were indeed happy enough under the influence of "Cork" Chandler's champagne and Napoleon brandy; but, as I looked at them, I was reminded only of the young pressman's disrespectful phrases about friends from the provinces and family gatherings at Christmas. We were old, we were dowdy, we were repellent.

"Too late?" Olive echoed.

As she followed the direction of my melancholy gaze, I felt that there was no need to clarify my meaning. I heard a choke; and I knew that this "evening to remember"

would be the evening which Olive and "The Cork" would remember as having decided them that they might—in her phrase—conceivably *not* "be able to marry in about fifty years' time".

"Things may brighten up when the theatres are over," I told her, after sending my waiter to find me a slice of cold ham. "Look!" I added, as the swing-doors opened to admit a riotous party of young people.

"Corky has overorganized this," Olive sighed.

I tried to reason with her, but I could make no headway against the logic of facts.

The leaders of the riotous young party had raced, laughing and singing, through the hall; but, on reaching the entrance to the restaurant, they stopped short as though they had blundered into a funeral.

"Heavens, what a crew!" one youth gasped in loud dismay.

"Uncle Timothy, from South Shields, standing treat to the family," cried another.

"Joker Chudleigh and Bat Wilson told you what it would be like," grumbled a third.

"I swear I didn't expect this, though."

Then they turned and raced, singing and laughing, through the hall and into the night.



INNOCENCE.

PINK and white, the bindweed buds
 Fold at end of day,
 When the tides and waterfloods
 Sigh and turn to grey . . .
 Along the dusky shore, deep calls to deep,—
 The bindweeds clustered on the grassy steep
 Heed not that calling,—they are fast asleep.
 Never hint of harm or care
 Comes, their rest to rouse;
 Honey-and-wine, the off-shore air
 Strokes their dreaming brows . . .
 From the long sea-line taut against the sky,
 The countless ages voice a passionate cry,
 The woes of all the world go streaming by;
 But the bindweeds sleep immune,
 Innocent, untainted,
 Only with the hours of June
 Joyfully acquainted . . .
 O, who would change for passion and unrest
 Exquisite dreamings of the childish breast?
 Say what you will,—the bindweeds' lot is best!

MAY BYRON.

THE STONES THAT WINKED

By RALPH DURAND

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

IN the days before Peter Darrell established British rule over the Wanazoa, Makimbantu had been witch-doctor-in-chief to the tribe. He was too important a man to concern himself with petty crime, but whenever Matipa, the paramount chief, considered that any section of his subjects was dissatisfied with his rule, he summoned to his *bualo* all his minor chiefs and headmen and ordered Makimbantu to "smell out" such of them as had been guilty of talking, or even so much as thinking, sedition.

The "smelling out" usually took place at night because Makimbantu understood the value of stage-effect in maintaining his reputation. The minor chiefs would assemble at the royal kraal at sundown and were made to stand silent and motionless in a half-circle round Matipa's stool. They were then left for an hour or so to consider uneasily whether any incautiously spoken words could have reached the royal ears. At this stage of the proceedings Makimbantu kept out of sight, but the ears of those assembled would from time to time be startled by uncanny sounds—the mewing of cats in the air above their heads, or the hooting of owls under the ground beneath their feet—caused, they were given to understand, by Makimbantu's familiar spirits arriving and reporting themselves for duty.

When it pleased Matipa to come out of his hut and seat himself on the stool on which none but he might sit, Makimbantu would emerge from his own quarters hung round with the insignia of his grim office, a string of jaw-bones around his neck and at his waist a girdle of malefactors' skulls. He would then move slowly round a big fire that had been lit in the centre of the *bualo*, chanting an invocation to the spirits of the underworld. Sometimes he would break off his chant and dance fantastically with his

shadow to the clattering of dead men's bones; sometimes he would stand still, question the spirits and receive answers from the heart of the leaping flames; sometimes he pirouetted slowly along the line of chiefs, snarling like a hyæna disturbed at its meat as he peered into their faces, and noting for his private information which of them flinched at his gaze. Then he would return to his eerie dancing, his gestures becoming ever more and more frantic, his shrieks more eldritch, till, foaming at the mouth, he fell at Matipa's feet, and lay rigid.

A shudder would pass through the assembly. Matipa would lean forward and listen intently. One by one, with long, nerve-racking intervals between each utterance, Makimbantu would call out names. The man whose name was called was at once seized by those who stood next to him, bound, and dragged to Matipa's feet. Before sunrise, unless his executioners were exceptionally successful in prolonging his torture for the paramount chief's delight, his head would be grinning from the top of one of the posts of the stockade that surrounded the royal *boma*.

When the grim farce was over and the witch-doctor returned to his normal behaviour he would feign ignorance as to what names he had uttered. He would ask what his mouth had said while his spirit was in the underworld. And sometimes he would profess astonishment, saying of this or that victim that he himself would never have suspected him to be guilty of high treason.

Makimbantu was undoubtedly an impostor. But it does not at all follow that he was a scoundrel. He had the typical savage African's callous cruelty and indifference to the sanctity of human life, but he was genuinely concerned for the interests of the tribe and the welfare of its head. He was a

genuine believer in what we call spiritualism, and though he knew that he himself was no clairvoyant he saw no harm in pretending to be one, for he was responsible to the paramount chief for the prevention of sedition and conspiracy and he had not at his command the white man's elaborate machinery for the detection of crime. He had been highly trained for his grim duties. In the days when he had been the apprentice of his predecessor he had been taught fraudulent tricks, designed merely to impress his audiences, such as the ventriloquism he practised; but he had learned also to use his brains, to train his memory to such a pitch that he could remember at need the smallest details of the idlest gossip uttered in his presence, and so to collate and arrange these in his mind that he could deduce from them much that a thicker-headed man would have entirely missed.

He was therefore able to make very shrewd guesses as to which of the Wanazoa chiefs were unduly ambitious, which had designs of their own to further, which were discontented with enactments that Matipa had made, and especially which governed their people justly. His methods of criminal investigation were not such as would have been approved by the police of civilized countries, but when he "smelt out" a man, though he might not have been able to prove any specific offence against him, his victim was invariably one of whom, in his own opinion, the community would be well rid.

When Peter Darrell assumed, on behalf of the Great White King, authority over the Wanazoa, and declared that none but he had power of life and death, Makimbantu's principal occupation ceased. He retired more or less into private life, interesting himself only in such smaller matters as fortune-telling, divining, and the detection of thieves. Though he no longer had power to bring those whom he regarded as major offenders to justice, his concern for the welfare of the community remained. His feelings towards the new government were much the same as would be those of a staunch Royalist whose country becomes a Republic under a resolute and efficient President. He was too conservative at heart to like being ruled by a white man, though he was honest enough to realise as time went on that Darrell, whose rule he considered to be quite ridiculously mild, might be as much concerned as himself for the welfare of the Wanazoa; but he could not bring himself actively to support his rule until he saw that the old order was

definitely dead and the new had permanently taken its place.

* * * * *

Darrell took his seat in his *bwalo* one morning utterly disinclined for his work. For more than five years he had laboured to govern the Wanazoa wisely, and had found joy in the knowledge that in spite of many disappointments he was slowly lifting them out of savagery and making them fairly respectable members of the British Empire. But to-day he looked at the years ahead of him with the deadness of spirit that a cross-country runner, far from his goal and with a stitch in his side, may feel when he reaches a long uphill slope of stiff clay ploughland.

"Who brings the *mlandu*?" he asked apathetically as he sat down. A babel of voices arose and half a dozen men hustled another up to the dais.

"Silence!" snapped Darrell. "Let one of you only speak. What is this *mlandu*?"

A minor chief whose woolly head was beginning to turn grey stood forward.

"Baba," he said. "My name is Tanga. I am chief of the Nswarka clan. My kraals lie on the sunset side of the valley through which runs the Fodia River. On the other side of the river are the kraals of the Mapatwa clan. This evil-doer is headman of one of the Mapatwa kraals. His name is Pangapao. A year ago some of Pangapao's pigs strayed across the river and did damage to the corn-fields of my people. My people chased the pigs away and, being angry, killed one of them."

Darrell yawned, picked up his pen and made a note of the names of the people concerned.

"The value of the pig was greater than the value of the damaged corn," continued Tanga, "so when the anger of my people had cooled they sent Pangapao the head and one of the hind-legs. Pangapao received the meat and we said, 'It is well. There is no *mlandu* between us.' But at the next harvest-time one of my people lost a cow. It was a black cow with a white star on its forehead, the tip of its tail white and white markings on the flank——"

Darrell yawned again and allowed his attention to wander. African witnesses do not easily distinguish between relevant and irrelevant evidence, and he knew that Tanga might be all the longer in coming to the point if he were not allowed to reach it in his own way. Darrell often felt utterly weary of the inter-village squabbles that took up such a large proportion of his time, but this morn-

ing it was not the monotony of the trivial side of his work that dejected him. He was thinking heart-hungrily of the girl he loved and had lost.

morning he had learned, not directly from Winifred, but indirectly from Mr. Rock, the missionary who was to have married them—who seemed to take it for granted that he had already heard of it—that Winifred had offered to stay at the mission-station and help with the work there. It was not, there-

fore, fear of Central African discomfort or of contact with uncouth Wanazoa that had induced her to break off the engagement; obviously it was from himself that she shrank. Darrell was not a vain man, but he would have been scarcely human if the thought had not deeply wounded his pride as well as his heart.

With a great effort he shook off his brooding and forced



"As Makimbantu admired the gleam of gold and the iridescent flashes of light . . . he drew nearer as silently as he could."

Until that day Darrell had supposed that Winifred Neville's reason for breaking off their engagement was that at the last moment she felt that she could not live in Central Africa, could not be comfortable in the wattle-and-daub house that was the best that he had been able to build for her, could not overcome a refined woman's natural antipathy to the very unrefined savages among whom she must live. But that very

himself to pay attention to Tanga's evidence.

"—the lion has killed no one except those of that kraal," the old man was saying—"but in three weeks it has carried off three of my people—one old woman, one girl scarcely old enough to carry water from the

river, and one full-grown man. So we know, *baba*, that the lion is Pangapao's familiar spirit that he has sent to take vengeance on us, and therefore——"

"Rubbish!" snapped Darrell. "A man cannot enter into league with a lion. The *mlandu* is dismissed."

It was by no means the first time that Darrell had had to listen to an accusation of the kind. Whenever among the Wanazoa a man died a natural death that was not due to old age or some other easily explainable cause his survivors generally jumped to the conclusion that he had been killed by witchcraft. They invariably did so when, as not infrequently happened, the deceased's grave was disturbed by hyænas; the theory in such a case being that the witch or wizard who had killed the man and the hyænas that dug up his corpse had entered into an unholy alliance by means of which the human ghoul and his carrion-eating partners were able to feast together on the dead man's flesh.

Usually Darrell listened to such accusations with the greatest care. In the first place because the belief in human ghouls was so widespread among the Wanazoa and so difficult to uproot that he was almost driven to the conclusion that it pointed to the survival of cannibalism among degenerate members of the tribe, for it was a comparatively simple matter to disinter a corpse in such a manner that suspicion would attach to perfectly innocent hyænas. Another reason for thinking that the practice was not wholly dead was that some men of the tribe belonged to an association members of which were pledged never under any circumstances to eat human flesh. Such a compact would have been meaningless if cannibalism had wholly died out, and if it still existed it was Darrell's business to know about it.

But his principal reason for listening with particular care to such accusations was that the Wanazoa would not advance far in the direction of modern civilization while they clung to superstitions such as the enlightened Briton abandoned many centuries ago. Usually, therefore, he examined and cross-examined and argued with the bringers of the accusations till they were convinced—or at least expressed conviction—that the idea of the possibility of partnership between a man and a wild beast was altogether ridiculous.

But to-day Darrell had no heart to repeat arguments that he had advanced on scores of similar occasions, or to face the heavy labour

of trying to make obstinate and muddle-headed people understand them.

"The *mlandu* is dismissed," he repeated, in answer to signs of dissatisfaction. "I have spoken."

Pangapao's accusers withdrew, but they went no further than beyond the stockade of the *boma*. There apparently they let Pangapao know what they thought of him, for a babel arose above which Darrell could from time to time hear the word *wonama* (liar), shouted either by Pangapao or by the dissatisfied Nswarka people.

Having dismissed the case so abruptly, Darrell found himself with nothing to do—or rather felt too listless to turn to any one of the many matters that needed attention but were not urgent. He sighed heavily, put his hand inside his shirt and pulled out a little bag of plaited grass that hung from his neck by a string. It was of native make, such as the Wanazoa used as receptacles for the charms they carried as an insurance against various kinds of calamity. From the bag he took a ring set with five small diamonds. For the hundredth time as he looked at it he told himself that if he had any common sense he would go down to the lake shore and throw it into deep water. But his love was greater than his common sense.

There was nothing at all remarkable about the ring. Any London jeweller could have produced an almost identical ring from his shelves at two minutes' notice. But Makimbantu, who was standing near the dais waiting for an opportunity to speak, had never seen anything in the least like it. Having seen Darrell take it from an amulet case, he naturally supposed that it was a charm of some kind. Anything relating to magic interested him professionally, for he believed in it profoundly, even though he knew his own claims to magical powers were fraudulent. As he admired the gleam of the gold and the iridescent flashes of light he realised that it must be a very superior charm indeed, a most powerful luck-bringer. To get a better view of it he drew nearer as silently as he could.

He was wearing several of the insignia of his profession. In deference to the white ruler's well-known humanitarian views he had abandoned the wearing of human bones and had substituted the bones of goats. Some of those he was wearing were only partially dry and still had ligaments adhering to them. On his head was an imperfectly cured otter-skin and attached to various parts of his body were the inflated

gall-bladders of pigs. He looked as if he had searched a rubbish-heap for all the nastiest things he could find for the adornment of his person—and he smelt like a rubbish-heap. Darrell smelt him, looked up, hastily hid the ring and asked him sharply what he wanted.

"*Baba*. I wish to talk," said Makimbantu. "Somewhile ago some foolish men came here to take your head, but when they found you the fear of your power turned their blood to milk and they dared not strike. What will you give me if I tell you who it was that put it into those foolish people's heads that it would be wise to kill you?"

If the offer of rewards to informers had been a part of Darrell's system of government half the Wanazoa tribe would have spent their time denouncing the other half.

"I do not buy lies," he said.

"Shall I tell you without asking promise of reward?"

Darrell jumped to the natural conclusion that the witch-doctor had an enemy whom he wished to get into trouble.

"I do not wish to know," he said. "That *mlandu* is finished. I have pardoned all that sought my head."

"I bind you to that word," said Makimbantu calmly. "We of the Wanazoa always lie unless the truth serves us better, but I know that you do not lie. *Baba*, it was I who sent those men to take your head."

Darrell was startled. He looked keenly at the witch-doctor, trying to understand his motive for making so damaging a confession.

"Why have you told me this?"

"Lest someone else should tell you."

Darrell was amazed. The witch-doctor had outwitted him by taking the surest possible way of averting punishment from himself. He knew that witch-doctors derive most of their power from a wide knowledge of human nature, but he would not have credited any savage with so shrewd an understanding of a white man's nature.

"I had another reason," continued Makimbantu. "When a man has once told the truth he will be believed a second time. *Baba*. I wish you to believe the words that are now on my tongue. That man Pangapao is an evil-doer, a wizard. If you set him at liberty he will do much harm to the Nswarka people."

Darrell's conscience was already troubling him for not trying to make Tanga realise that his accusation against Pangapao was ridiculous. Moreover, a man so shrewd as Makimbantu had shown himself to be was

better worth arguing with than the ordinary muddle-head.

"We will talk of this," he said. "The accusation against Pangapao is that he is in league with a lion. That is foolish. Men cannot make compacts with lions."

"The lion that has killed three of Tanga's clan is no ordinary lion. It has the body of a lion but the fearlessness of a man. An ordinary lion does not kill man except to defend itself when the hunters surround it. This lion comes to the kraal for its meat, even in broad day when all are awake. Without doubt Pangapao has bewitched it that it may kill his enemies."

"A lion will take man for its meat when it is too old and feeble to hunt buck," said Darrell. "Then hunger overcomes fear."

"This lion is young," persisted Makimbantu. "It is scarcely yet full grown."

Darrell continued to argue. He pointed out that when the rinderpest killed off vast numbers of the buck in the country many lions were driven by hunger to become man-eaters before their time, and suggested that this particular lion, having been a cub at the time, may have learned from its parents not to fear man. But Makimbantu refused to be convinced.

"But this lion has also the wit of a man," he continued. "I can prove it."

"Speak then."

"There was a feud between Pangapao and some people of the Nswarka in the matter of a pig. Later Tanga came to me saying that one of his people had lost a cow. He offered two goats as a fee if I would find the cow. I told Tanga to come again at sundown, bringing a fowl to sacrifice to the spirits, and said that unless other spirits were stronger than my spirits I would find the cow."

"When he had gone I went and talked to the Nswarka herd-boys and asked what they were doing when the cow strayed. They said that they were eating sweet-cane that some boys from Pangapao's village had given them."

"I then went to Pangapao's village. The women were cooking meat. The smell of the meat was beef. Yet I knew that Pangapao had asked none of his neighbours to feast with him."

"I went away, and returned, having rubbed my ankles with medicine by the power of which all the dogs of Pangapao's village followed me when I went back to my own kraal. I shut up the dogs in my goat-pen and forced them to swallow other medicine by the power of which they vomited."

They vomited scraps of ox-hide. The hide was black and white.

"When Tanga came at sundown I sacrificed the fowl and gave it to my third wife to cook. Then I threw the bones and told Tanga that it was a black cow with white points that his people had lost. I told him that Pangapao had stolen it. Tanga then came to your *bwalo*, and brought a *mlandu* against Pangapao."

"I remember the case," said Darrell. "My word was that Pangapao was guilty of theft. I sent him to work at road-making for six months with chains on his ankles. Also I made him give his best cow to the owner of the stolen cow. But what has all this to do with the lion?"

"Have patience, *baba*. One should not begin to eat until the water has boiled. When Pangapao was released from the road-making, he went to Nswarka and said: 'Let there be peace between me and you. My wives have brewed much beer to comfort my heart. Come you with your people and share it with me.' But the Nswarka people feared lest there should be poison in the beer and they did not go. That night Pangapao went to the kraal of the people that had killed his pig, and standing afar off in the darkness shouted that he would send his familiar spirit to kill every man, woman and child, every ox, goat, pig and fowl in the kraal."

Darrell made a note. He had ordained that threats of the kind constituted a criminal offence, because the African has so lively a fear of witchcraft that the mere threat of it may make him seriously, sometimes even fatally, ill.

"Why was not that *mlandu* reported to me?" he asked.

"Because next morning Pangapao went to the kraal and took back his words, saying that they were empty words, meaning nothing. But some days later at an hour when most of the people were abroad a boy from Pangapao's kraal came to that kraal to steal. An old woman saw him and sent a girl running to the fields to give warning."

"It is no new thing for boys to steal," commented Darrell.

"When boys steal they steal food. That boy stole an old loin-cloth that he found stuffed between the door-post and the thatch in one of the huts. A boy has no use for another man's rags, but a witch can work powerful magic with anything that has touched the skin of the man against whom he wishes to work evil. Next day, *baba*, the girl that ran to give warning was playing

with others on the edge of the cornfield, in full view of all the women that were hoeing, when the lion sprang out of the long-grass and carried her off. Two days later it came right into the kraal at high noon when all were sleeping. It entered the hut of the old woman that had sent the child to give warning and carried her off. Three days later again, when all the men of the kraal were sitting talking at the kraal gate, the lion came out of the bush and ran at them without fear and carried off the man whose loin-cloth the boy had stolen. Without any doubt, *baba*, that lion is the servant of Pangapao."

On appointing him to govern the Wanazoa the Commissioner for British Megobaniland had told Darrell not to bind himself by what he knew of English law, but to use his own common sense instead and make his own laws as he went along.

"Bring Pangapao and all the witnesses back into the *bwalo*," he said. "I will try the case again."

Among the qualities that made the Wanazoa believe that Darrell possessed magical powers was his ability to sort the truth out of an elaborately tangled skein of lies. One of his methods was to ask a witness a string of entirely irrelevant questions, the answers to which the witness was unlikely to have rehearsed with his friends before coming into court. The witness, being unprepared for these, would be in doubt what answers to give, and if he had anything to conceal would lie, in order to be on what he considered the safe side. Presently Darrell would slip in a question the answer to which he knew and could prove. If the witness fell into the trap and lied again he could without injustice be flogged, and after the flogging arrival at the truth was usually a fairly simple matter. But his principal device for arriving at the truth was to ask questions that, though relevant, were not such as the witness expected to be asked.

On this occasion he made all the witnesses stand in a line in front of him, so that, not being able to look at each other, they could not exchange signals.

"Concerning that black cow with white points," he said, pointing at Pangapao. "Was it a yearling heifer?"

The effect of the question on Pangapao was to arouse a fear that he would again be made to pay compensation.

"No, *baba*," he said. "It was old and very tough. There was no fat on it."

Murmurs of dissent arose from Tanga's party. But Darrell was not interested in the age of the cow. He was confirmed in the opinion, formed at the previous *mlandu*, that Pangapao had lied at the time when he strenuously denied the theft. He next pointed to the boy who was accused of being Pangapao's accomplice.

question which, if either, had spoken the truth did not interest Darrell. He was satisfied that the story of the stolen loin-cloth was not an invention of Tanga's.

He pointed to Pangapao again.

"Were you drunk or sober when you went to the kraal of those who had killed your pig and shouted threats?"



"The witnesses stood in a line in front of him, so that, not being able to look at each other, they could not exchange signals."

"What did Pangapao pay you for stealing the old cloth?" he demanded.

The boy did not know what to answer. He had been told to deny the theft, but he had not been prepared to meet side issues.

"Pangapao paid me nothing. He said he would beat me if I——"

"That is a lie," shouted Pangapao.

One of the two had obviously lied, but the

"I was drunk, *baba*, very drunk and foolish," said Pangapao eagerly. "I wished them no evil. I love all the Nswarka people. I had made a feast for them and they would not come, so I drank all the beer myself lest it should go sour."

The plea was intended to mitigate the offence—but it admitted the offence.

"Show me what is in your amulet case,"

said Darrell. "No. Do not open it. Give it to me unopened."

Darrell took the amulet case—just such a one as that in which he himself carried Winifred's rejected engagement ring—and emptied its contents on to his table. They comprised a crocodile's tooth, a field-

"The elephant's hair is to give strength," said the sentry. "One who carries a crocodile's tooth may ford a river without fear of being seized by a crocodile. I do not know what the powder is for, nor the little skull. If a man smokes the leaf he will become dizzy. The man who brought this



"'Concerning that black cow with white points,' said Darrell, pointing at Pangapao. 'Was it a yearling heifer?'"

mouse's skull, a hair from an elephant's tail, some powder in a piece of twisted rag and a newly-plucked leaf of hemp. It was the hemp-leaf that Darrell had expected to find. He knew its purpose, but to satisfy all present he wished it to be explained by a perfectly independent witness. He sent for the Rifleman who was on sentry-duty at the *boma* gate and asked him what was supposed to be the magical property of each article.

into court did not wish to become dizzy himself. He wished you to become dizzy, *baba*, so that you should not be able to see the difference between truth and lies."

Darrell turned to Pangapao.

"If you had come to court with a clean heart you would have wished me to see the truth clearly. It is foolish of these people to believe that the lion is your familiar spirit, for a lion is not a dog or a cow to obey a

man's will. But you have tried to work magic to their hurt. If I set you free you will again try to work black magic on them, and it may be that when you find that magic has no power you will devise some other means of harming them. You will go back to the chains for yet another six months, and when you are free you will build your hut in some village that I will choose far away from the kraals of the Nswarka whom you hate. I have spoken." He beckoned to a Rifleman. "Take him and put chains on his ankles."

"But, *baba*," protested Tanga. "When he is a free man once more he can again send his lion to kill us. A lion can travel far."

"I have told you that a man cannot make a compact with a wild beast. However, you need not fear, for the lion will soon be dead. I myself will kill it."

* * * * *

Dread of the discomforts of life in Central Africa had had its part in making Winifred break off her engagement with Peter Darrell. But her chief reason had been doubt as to whether he still loved her. She had braced herself to endure the discomforts. She had pledged herself to stay in Africa till she had done for the missionary work that she was specially qualified to do. And now she wanted to see Peter again, to read what his eyes, if not his lips, had to tell her. She wrote to him asking him to come and see her.

She entrusted her letter to a Baseni boy whose principal qualification for the responsibility was that he could speak a little English. Unfortunately Tchaia had had painful experience of the dangers that may attend letter-carrying. In the days when he worked for an English colonist in the district from which the Rocks had come his master had sent him to a neighbour with a note and a dozen loaves of bread. He had eaten some of the loaves as he walked, and though he had carefully wrapped his loin-cloth round the letter so that it should not see him eat them, the white man had accused him of the theft, quoting the note as his authority, and had given him the beating he deserved.

Had he been told to take a letter to anyone but Darrell he might have risked the consequences. But it was Darrell's business to punish offenders, and Tchaia did not know which of his many lapses from virtue Winifred wished to report. Instead of going to the *boma*, therefore, he hid the letter in a hollow tree as soon as he got out of sight of the mission-station, spent the bulk of the day very pleasantly, gossiping, flirting and drinking beer in a neighbouring village, and to-

wards sundown went back to the mission-station and claimed the beads that Winifred had promised to pay him for his labours.

"Did he give you no letter to bring back?" she asked.

"No," said Tchaia promptly.

"What did he say when you gave him the letter?"

It was not so easy to find a plausible answer to this question. But Tchaia remembered an occasion when a letter that he had carried, though it had angered the man who received it, had worked himself no evil. He plucked a leaf from a tree, tore it to pieces and stamped on them.

"He do all same like this," he lied glibly. "He do like that."

With a heavy heart Winifred left her hut and strolled by the shore of the lake. It seemed certain that Peter's love for her was dead, and now she realised that her love for him was alive and growing in force. She longed for him.

Presently there was a stir in the little settlement. A man outlined on a hill-top against the sunset glow was gesticulating and shouting and people were running out of their huts to listen. Mr. Rock had told her how news of tribal interest was passed from hill-top to hill-top by bush-telegraph at an authenticated speed of thirty miles an hour. She did not suppose that the man's news had any interest for her, but because she wanted to escape from her own thoughts she went back to learn what was causing so much excitement. When she reached the circle of huts she found Rock hurriedly packing a handbag with bandages and antiseptic ointments.

"Darrell has been mauled by a lion about ten miles from here," he said. "He killed it, but it had time to knock him down and savage him before it died. They are bringing him here and I am going to meet them. Help my wife get a hut cleared out and a bed made ready."

For a moment Winifred felt a sense of utter loss. And now that it seemed too late she knew for a certainty that she loved Peter. But when she heard that his wounds were not at all necessarily fatal she felt only pity for the sufferer, and pity for him soon gave way to joy on her own account. Peter would be brought to the mission-station. She would see him daily. She would even be with him all day, for she could best be spared to nurse him. And when he was convalescent again she would have ample opportunity of discovering whether he still loved her.

"Isn't it fortunate," said Mrs. Rock, as she stuffed a pillow into her only linen pillow-case, "that *The Lady of the Lake* is at Brazen-bridge's wharf. I have sent a message and she will probably start to come here as soon as the moon rises. Mr. Darrell will be on his way to Kilibula by sunrise. I expect that the Medical Officer there will rush him down to the coast and put him on board a ship for England. I know that leave is due to him, and it will take him months to get back his full strength after being mauled by a lion."

Winifred's hopes of long, sweet hours with a convalescent, grateful and loving patient were rudely shattered. Then she found what comfort she could in the thought that it would take *The Lady of the Lake* five days to get to the other end of Lake Madzikulu.

"May I go with him as far as Kilibula?" she asked anxiously.

But Mrs. Rock shook her head.

"I shall go with him," she said. "I am a trained nurse."

"But I have gone through an ambulance course. I could put on his bandages."

"But you couldn't steel your heart when he catches hold of your hand and cries for his next dose of morphia before it is due. Lion-bites are terrible. They always turn septic and the pain they give is agonising."

"At least you will let me sit with him till the steamer comes," faltered Winifred. "You will need sleep before you start."

"I will be glad if you will do that," said Mrs. Rock. "Mr. Rock will be worn out with his long night's tramp after a hard day's work. And I don't think there will be much for you to do. Mr. Darrell is not likely to be conscious."

Darrell was in a heavy, drug-induced stupor when at midnight he was brought in to the mission-station. *The Lady of the Lake* was expected to arrive at dawn. There were only five short hours in which Winifred could hope for an answer to the question that troubled her. If Darrell's amulet case had still hung from his neck she would have had sufficient answer, for she would not have failed to see it as she helped to slip a pyjama jacket over his bandages—the lion's teeth had met in his shoulder and its claws had deeply gashed his chest. It would have been natural to look in the amulet case to see if it contained anything of importance. She would have found the ring that she had given back to him and would have guessed how much he cherished his only remaining link with her. But the ring in its

grass-woven case was lying on the ground at the spot where the lion had seized him.

Chiteema, Darrell's faithful servant, shared Winifred's vigil, not because she wanted him, but because he obstinately refused to understand her when she tried to tell him to go away. She wanted no one but herself to be near Peter when he opened his eyes. Would they light up at sight of her—or would he turn them away from her? The strain of waiting to know became almost intolerable. Usually to a night-watcher by a sick man's bedside time seems to stand still. Now the clock seemed to move with haste. Two o'clock passed. Four o'clock passed and still Peter's eyes had not opened. At five o'clock the sound of a steam-whistle in the distance announced that *The Lady of the Lake* was near.

And then at last Peter opened his eyes. But there was no message for Winifred in them. He stared at her blankly as if he did not recognise her, then he sat up and began to fumble with eager trembling fingers inside the pyjama jacket. Winifred pressed him gently back on to his pillow. Then at last he spoke, but of what he said she understood nothing, for in his delirium he spoke in the language of which as yet Winifred knew only a few isolated words, the language that he had had to speak all through the long years of his loneliness. Chiteema understood, but could not interpret, because he could speak no English. He did not try to interpret, but after listening for a moment he slipped out of the hut and disappeared. So Winifred's question was still unanswered when she stood on the lake shore and watched *The Lady of the Lake* disappear in the blinding glare of the newly-risen sun.

* * * * *

When an African is in search of something he has lost he goes for help to a magician with even more confidence than a Londoner goes to Scotland Yard. Though his fees were the highest of any magician's in the country, Chiteema, because of the love that he had for his master, went as fast as he could go to Makimbantu.

"Our *baba* has lost a charm," he said.

If Makimbantu had honestly admitted that he believed that he had seen the charm in Darrell's hands he would have lost a fine opportunity of impressing Chiteema with his wonderful powers. He brought out his divining sticks and juggled with them.

"It was in the shape of a ring," he said after one or two throws.

"I agree," said Chiteema.

Makimbantu threw the sticks again.

"It was of yellow metal."

"I agree," said Chiteema.

"It was of yellow metal, but it had in it stones that winked."

"I agree," said Chiteema.

Makimbantu gathered up his divining sticks and put them away.

"Come back at sundown with a white cock to sacrifice," he said.

When Chiteema had gone the magician thought a while. To a man of his intelligence it was fairly obvious how Darrell had come to lose the ring. But as the spot where he had been mauled by the lion had since been visited by many people who had gone there to kick and otherwise insult its dead carcase, it was of little use to go there and look for it. Feeling quite sure that someone had picked up and pouched so beautiful a gaud, he sent a man to the nearest hill-top to broadcast the news of Darrell's loss, together with a warning that the white man's familiar spirit would send locusts to the crops of the finder, murrain to his cattle, and inflict on his person a painful, lingering and ultimately fatal disease. This was followed by advice that the best way for the finder to avert the evil was for him to employ Makimbantu to propitiate the offended spirit. By the time that Chiteema had returned with a white cock to sacrifice Makimbantu was the richer by two goats paid him by the finder of the ring, and the ring itself was in his own amulet case.

"You may keep the bird," he said. "It is useless to sacrifice it. There are spirits at work that are stronger than the spirits that obey me, and they will not let me find the ring."

Makimbantu was an honest man according to his dim lights, but the temptation to keep the ring had been too strong for him. It was not because it was beautiful in itself or even because he believed it to be a charm of exceptional power. As he turned the ring over and over in the privacy of his hut he was amazed to see how the diamonds flashed in the semi-darkness. They seemed to be spelling a sort of Morse code. He knew nothing of the dot-and-dash system of civilised telegraphists, but long before the Morse code was invented his own people had learned a way, faster than the ordinary bush-telegraph, of sending messages across country, by tapping on drums. It seemed to Makimbantu that the glittering stones were flashing a message by a system that

he might in time learn to understand. On that belief logically followed the idea that the stone was inhabited by a spirit, a spirit that had advised and guided Darrell in all that he did, a spirit from which he had derived his apparently supernatural wisdom and power. By keeping the ring Makimbantu believed that he would acquire the power and wisdom that had been Darrell's. The temptation to keep it was too great to be resisted by an ambitious man who had never had much practice in resisting temptation.

Makimbantu did not sleep that night. At first he was too much excited by the thought of the miraculous power that the ring would bring him. Later, with a view to emulating it, he reviewed all the good that Darrell had done in the country. He remembered the trust that the Wanzoa had learned to put in his word, of the confidence with which he himself had confessed to attempting to bring about his death. And then occurred what was perhaps the greatest miracle of all the miracles that Darrell had achieved. Thought of the White Man's virtues awoke in Makimbantu the germs of a conscience. In the morning he sent for Chiteema and handed him the ring.

"There is nothing to pay," he said. "I am our *baba's* servant."

* * * * *

Chiteema showed the ring to Rock.

"Without doubt it is a charm of great power," he said. "Many times of late I have seen him hold it in his hands. Yet I do not think it is a lucky charm. I, who know him well, know that he was unhappy when he looked at it. If you will tell me where he has gone I will take it to him. It may be that he wishes to die, but the Old Ones who went before will not let him cross the river without it."

Rock translated what he had said to Winifred. A new light came into her eyes and she put the ring back into its right place on the third finger of her hand.

"I will keep it for him, or"—she laid a hand entreatingly on Rock's arm—"would you think me very faithless if I broke my promise to you and took it to him?"

"Of course not," said Rock. "You had much better take it to him. In spite of Chiteema's opinion, I expect it will bring him luck, and in fact I doubt if he will get properly strong again until you have taken it to him. Never mind for the present about your promise. You can keep it when Darrell brings you out again."

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

By MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLER

I.

"The Duchess of St. Andrews, who is noted for her kindness of heart, cannot be aware that there now lives on the Duke's property, and in one of the Duke's houses, The Small Manor, Willeyford, a most cruel stepmother named Mrs. Barcombe. She has a little stepdaughter, aged six years old, to whom she is always actively unkind, not to say cruel. She often shuts up the little girl, whose name is Amy, for hours in a dark cupboard. The S.P.C.C. have been warned, but with no result. Major Barcombe goes in fear of his wife, and is not man enough to interfere and save his child from ill-treatment. The Barcombes are very snobbish, and they are very much annoyed that the Duchess has not called."

THE above anonymous communication was written in block letters on a piece of plain cream-laid note-paper, but the envelope was addressed in what was obviously a disguised handwriting.

Now there is generally something both disturbing and alarming in the receipt of an anonymous letter. But the Duchess had once been rendered a great service through a missive of the kind. As a young married woman she had engaged a housekeeper who was a systematic thief. And then some member of her household—the Duchess never knew who the person was—had written and told her the truth. Thus it was that as she gazed down at the curious-looking missive, she did not feel quite the sensation of recoil and of suspicion which most people feel when reading an anonymous letter.

On the contrary, to her mind those terse sentences showed every sign of having been indited with a feeling of honest indignation and the desire to do good. There was one thing she did not like in the letter. This was the vulgarity, and touch of animosity, apparent in the last sentence. But she told herself that the writer might be a vulgar, while yet a truthful and a brave, woman.

What a horrible story! And how shame-

ful that this Major Barcombe, whoever he might be, did not take the part of his own child against his cruel second wife.

Willeyford was a charming village, on the extreme edge of the Duke's large property, and the Duchess was on terms of old friendship with Mrs. Derbyshire, the rector's wife. But she had not yet met the Barcombes.

The letter had arrived at the Castle by the first post; and the whole of that day the Duchess was haunted by the thought of a poor little child shut up in a dark cupboard. At last she made up her mind to show the letter to the Duke. There were a good many people staying with them just then, and the first moment when she could speak to her husband with comfort, alone, was just before dressing for dinner.

The Duke read through the letter; then he exclaimed:

"It passes my understanding how a woman of your age can pay the slightest attention to an anonymous letter!"

"I don't see what my age has to do with it," she answered a little tartly. "We were both a great deal younger than we are now when we had reason to be very grateful to the writer of an anonymous letter."

"What do you mean?"

And then, before she could answer—"Hold on!" he cried. "You're right, Laura! I do remember all about it now. But this is a very different pair of shoes. It really doesn't concern us—"

And then he felt just a little ashamed of himself, for under his usual cold manner he had a good heart, and he was a most conscientious man. So—"It seems to me odd that the Society for the Protection of Children won't do anything. Would you like me to drop them a line?"

"No, I don't want you to do anything—yet," said the Duchess, feeling ruffled, "I'll

get in touch with Mrs. Derbyshire and find out what she thinks of the Barcombes."

"That's not a bad idea."

Then the Duke thrust his hand under the Duchess's arm. "Be careful, my darling! Don't let your kind heart run away with you. There may be exceptions to prove the rule, but an anonymous letter is almost always the work of a despicable human being. If I were you I should not show that letter, even to Mrs. Derbyshire."

"Very well, I won't."

The Duke went on in a musing tone, "I've received quite a number of anonymous letters in my life."

"James! How exciting, and you've never showed me *one*!"

"I had a peculiarly unpleasing anonymous letter about your son-in-law, Gerald Armytage, not long before he married Letty," he chuckled.

The Duchess felt very piqued. "I think you ought to have shown me *that* letter, James."

He became grave. "I can laugh now. But I felt very much disturbed at the time. In fact, I showed it to Sharpe——"

Mr. Sharpe was the Duke's solicitor, and always a very present help in time of trouble.

"But what could *anyone* say about Gerald?"

"I'll give you a lead! The letter was written by a girl who had wanted to marry Gerald. His mother thought the world of her," and again the Duke chuckled.

The Duchess clapped her hands. "That solemn prig! Was Gerald a flirt in his bachelor days?"

"I don't think the poor chap was to blame at all. But when he became engaged to Letty, his mother's young friend thought she'd put a spoke in his wheel!"

After the Duke had left her the Duchess went on thinking of her son-in-law. She was genuinely astounded by that curious little piece of unsuspected news. Hurt, too, that her husband had never spoken to her of the matter, though she had the honesty to admit to herself that it was probably a good thing that he had kept his own counsel. Neither of them had liked their eldest daughter's lover. But now they realised he had very good points. Also that, after all, nothing mattered, so long as he made his young wife happy. And he certainly did that.

Before beginning to dress, the Duchess wrote an affectionate little note to Mrs.

Derbyshire, asking herself, if it were quite convenient, over to Willeyford Rectory for tea on the following afternoon.

There are moments in a human life when a man or woman feels as if he or she is gliding into a backwater, and that nothing very interesting, exciting, or what a certain type of modern person calls "thrilling," will ever come his or her way again! This was now happening to the Duchess. And for the first time in her life, she somehow felt depressed. At the time she could have done so, she had taken no trouble to be either a social or a philanthropic leader. Her husband, whom she dearly loved, seemed certain, now, to play no great part in the public life of his country, a fact which secretly filled her with chagrin, for she had a high opinion of his abilities, and now and again she feared he was what is called "a disappointed man."

Consciously she longed for something, anything, to happen! And, being the manner of woman she was, full of a certain kind of high courage, she would have been amazed had anyone reminded her of what old-fashioned folk call "the curse of an answered prayer."

She felt as if she were nearing the end of the Book of Life, and it was a very strange sensation to a woman still instinct with vitality and the joy of life.

So it was that she motored off to Willeyford feeling just a little excited and pleased to be engaged on what she believed would prove a mission of mercy.

It was all very well for the Duke to speak as he had done of anonymous letters! She knew what a great benefit she had once derived from just such a missive as that which she had left locked up at home, for fear she should be tempted to break her promise and show it to Mrs. Derbyshire.

As she entered the village she took up the speaking-tube, "Do you know where The Small Manor is, Hoskin?"

"We are just coming to it, Your Grace."

It was a beautiful, almost perfect dwelling-house, built of grey stone, and set in a lovely garden. And then the Duchess shuddered inwardly. How strange that within those old walls there should be enacted the kind of tragedy which now filled her vivid imagination!

It was with a sense of relief that she threw an affectionate look at the ugly, mid-Victorian rectory, far too big and too expensive for its present occupants, for it had been

built at a time when England was the most prosperous country in the world, and as generous to her clergy as she was to all those who served her well and faithfully.

II.

THE door of the Rectory was opened by an untidy-looking girl of about fourteen. But it was clear that Her Grace was expected; for the Duchess was shown at once into the large shabby drawing-room, where every-

Kind, old-fashioned-looking Mrs. Derbyshire came into the room, and before the Duchess had been able to open on the delicate matter which was the real reason for her visit, exclaimed: "Bettine was going away this morning, Duchess. But she has stayed on to see you."

Now the Duchess was not at all anxious to see her hostess's daughter, but she tried to look pleased; and hardly had she said a suitable word in answer, before the



"The Duke read through the letter; then he exclaimed: 'It passes my understanding how a woman of your age can pay the slightest attention to an anonymous letter!'"

thing spoke of refinement wedded to poverty.

It was fortunate, so the Duchess told herself, that the Rector's only child, a daughter who, christened Elizabeth, chose to call herself Bettine, had married a wealthy man of business, who had once been tutored, in the long ago, by his present wife's father. Bettine Gunston was pretty, and had become what is now called smart. Even as a girl, she had not been liked in the neighbourhood, and she was seldom at Willeyford.

door opened again and Bettine came in.

Mrs. Derbyshire's guest rose to her feet. "Horrid, vain, purse-proud girl! How dare she get herself up like this in her parents' house?" she said to herself with indignation, and looking with inward disfavour at the very good-looking young woman now standing before her.

Bettine Gunston was very much made up. Her lips were poppy red, and she was rouged. She wore a velvet dress that showed off her pretty figure to great advan-

tage. The skirt of her frock was edged with costly fur, and round her neck there hung a splendid string of pearls.

The Duchess told herself that the sale of, say, two or three of those pearls would provide enough money to turn this cheerless house into a comfortable dwelling. But such an idea, as well the visitor knew, would never have entered Bettine's charming head.

Soon the three ladies were engaged in the kind of mild gossip common to all country neighbourhoods, and meanwhile the Duchess was asking herself with anxiety what she should do about the letter which was the real cause of her being here. The Duke's words of caution echoed in her ears, and yet in a sense the matter was so urgent! Then Mrs. Derbyshire suddenly seemed to open the way, for she exclaimed: "Duchess, I've got a favour to ask you."

"It's granted, my dear——"

"I wonder if you would have the kindness, on your way back to the Castle, to call on Major and Mrs. Barcombe? Bettine used to know him quite well. He's a keen sportsman," she glanced deprecatingly at her daughter, "and Mrs. Barcombe is a nice, quiet sort of woman."

The Duchess hesitated, and long after she reminded herself of the wise old proverb, "The woman who hesitates is lost."

"Major Barcombe may be a keen sportsman, but I'm afraid from what I hear that he's not a good father."

"Not a good father?" exclaimed Mrs. Derbyshire in a tone of extreme surprise. "Who can have told you such a thing as that, Duchess? He's not a good-tempered man, but he's devoted to his children."

"I don't feel I can quote my authority. But I have heard, and I'm afraid it's true, that Mrs. Barcombe is a most unkind, indeed cruel, stepmother."

And then, before Mrs. Derbyshire could answer, her daughter took a hand. "I never cared for that woman," cried Bettine Gunston excitedly. "I can't think what Jock Barcombe saw in her. His marriage took all his friends very much by surprise."

And then her mother interposed in a troubled voice, "I'm more surprised than I can say, Duchess. I confess I don't know much of Mrs. Barcombe. She's a reserved woman, and she keeps herself to herself, as the village people say. They're far from well off, and she acts as nurse and governess to the children. Perhaps that tries her

temper, but I can't believe that she's a cruel woman!"

"I'm afraid she is," said the Duchess firmly. "I heard——" and then she stopped for a moment, for she was truthful, and she hadn't exactly heard what she was going to say. "I've reason to fear that she sometimes shuts up her little stepdaughter in a dark cupboard, for hours at a time——"

"Mother! I expect that's the famous cupboard under the staircase that some people think was once a priest's hiding-place," exclaimed Mrs. Gunston. "It must be dreadful for Jock Barcombe."

"I blame him quite as much as I do her," said the Duchess in a decided tone. "In fact, I can't conceive anything in the nature of a man standing by and seeing his little child made unhappy."

Mrs. Derbyshire said in a troubled voice, "Will you allow me to tell the Rector this story, Duchess? Something ought to be done about it——"

"Certainly something ought to be done! Indeed, I will be frank with you, my dear old friend; it was so that I could ask you about the Barcombes that I came here this afternoon."

"I've never liked her! I've always thought he was a million times too good for her!" repeated Mrs. Derbyshire's daughter, as if to herself, and there was an undercurrent of triumph in her voice.

The Duchess, for once, felt in sympathy with Bettine Gunston. "When will you be coming here again?" she asked. "Will your husband be with you?"

"We shall both be down for Christmas, and baby too! I do hope you will allow me to bring my husband over to the Castle to tea one day?"

"Perhaps you would both come for the New Year week-end," said the Duchess graciously. "I know the Duke would like to meet your husband. He was so sorry to miss your wedding, my dear, and so was I."

Bettine Gunston got up; she had achieved everything, and more than everything she had hoped to achieve when she had made up her mind to stay on for a few hours in order to see the Duchess.

"Well, mother? I shall have to be off soon now—I promised to go in and see Rose Ingleside for a few minutes on my way to the station."

As the Duchess kissed her good-bye, she murmured, "I need hardly tell you, my dear, that every word I've said this after-

noon is absolutely confidential? Your father and I will consult as to what had better be done. I don't suppose Mrs. Barcombe is causing actual bodily harm to her little stepdaughter, and such a case, as I dare say you know, is not easy to tackle."

"I wouldn't think of repeating anything you have told me!" exclaimed Bettine eagerly.

As she closed the door behind her the mother turned to the Duchess. "Doesn't she look well and happy?" she said fondly. "I can't tell you what a good fellow our son-in-law is, and so devoted, too! Though they've been married nearly two years, you might think he was still on his honeymoon."

"And now tell me," said the Duchess, lowering her voice, "what do you *really* think of Major and Mrs. Barcombe? After all, they're living only a few yards outside your gates."

"I used to dislike Major Barcombe," said Mrs. Derbyshire slowly. And then, when she saw the look of surprise flash across the Duchess's face, she added with a touch of reluctance: "When he was a widower he used to be down here a good deal fishing, and at one time I was afraid that he and Bettine were becoming great friends. I could see he was extremely attracted by her, but he was one of those men who love and ride away. Besides, from all I could hear, he was very poor in those days, and I knew that Bettine would have been miserable as a poor man's wife."

"But if he's poor," said the Duchess, surprised, "how can they live in The Small Manor? In spite of its name it's a good-sized house."

"Mrs. Barcombe has money," said Mrs. Derbyshire quickly. "Bettine found out all about her at the time of the marriage. She has about fifteen hundred a year of her own. But Major Barcombe is an extravagant man, and she has to be careful. Are you quite sure, Duchess, that your information is correct, I mean about Mrs. Barcombe? I know she devotes herself to her step-children; in fact, some time ago she sent their governess away. She's very fond of teaching, I believe."

The Duchess laughed. "I think that's a black mark against her!" she exclaimed. "In any case, it's always a mistake for a mother to play at governess. It never works well." And then as she rose, she observed, "I'm sure you will understand that I would rather not call at The Small

Manor just yet? May I go and see the Rector for a few moments?"

But when the two ladies went into the Rector's study, they found a slip of paper on the table saying he had been called out.

"I'll tell him all you have told me, and we will see what he thinks can be done," said Mrs. Derbyshire. "Mrs. Barcombe is going away alone for a change to-morrow, and will be away a fortnight."

"It's a comfort to feel that her step-children will be without her for that time at any rate," observed the Duchess.

"Well, Laura, how about your visit to Willeyford?" asked the Duke that same evening.

"I didn't find out anything. But I gather that Major Barcombe's not a nice man. He used to be in love with Bettine."

"That only shows he has poor taste in women——"

"She was there and I could see she doesn't like Mrs. Barcombe. But she still has a kindness for Major Barcombe."

"I hope you said nothing before Bettine——"

"I couldn't help it, James. She was there the whole time, and she had stayed on to see me. But I didn't mention the anonymous letter."

Even so the Duke looked rather dismayed. "I hope you were careful as to what you did say. However, I don't suppose it will make any odds——"

III.

THREE weeks went by, and on a certain afternoon, the Duchess suddenly told herself, with a feeling of dismay, that as Mrs. Barcombe must now be back at Willeyford, it was surely time that she heard from the Rector or Mrs. Derbyshire? And then, while she was saying this to herself, while pouring out tea in the Long Library for several members of her house party, the lady of whom she was thinking was announced.

"My dear," she exclaimed to one of her younger guests, "will you pour out tea for me?" and then she almost ran to meet her visitor. "Isn't it extraordinary?" she exclaimed. "I was thinking of you and of the Rector that very moment!"

"I wonder, Duchess, if I could see you just for a few moments, alone?" murmured Mrs. Derbyshire. She looked very much disturbed and unlike herself.

"Why, of course you can. We'll go into

the Red Drawing-room." The Duchess felt full of excitement and curiosity. Mrs. Derbyshire had evidently come to tell her something of a serious nature. And when, a few moments later, she had shown her guest into an empty sitting-room, she exclaimed, "Don't look so worried! Whatever is wrong shall be made right."

"Do you remember, Duchess, that when you came to see me you told us—me and Bettine—of something you'd heard about Mrs. Barcombe?" said her visitor in a quavering voice.

"Why yes, of course I do! Have you found out anything?" The Duchess was all eagerness.

"I wonder," said Mrs. Derbyshire hesitatingly, "whether you've heard anything more about it?"

The other shook her head. "No, we've heard nothing! And I haven't said a word about the matter to anybody. It's just three weeks ago since I went over to Willeyford, so I suppose Mrs. Barcombe is back at The Small Manor?"

"Yes, she came back a few days ago," said Mrs. Derbyshire in a low voice. "But, Duchess?"

The two looked at one another in silence for a moment, and there came over the Duchess just a little feeling of discomfort, of anxiety. "You don't mean," she exclaimed in a tone of horror, "that the little girl is dead?"

Her lively imagination had conjured up a dreadful vision of a child stifled, maybe, for lack of air, in a small dark cupboard.

"Oh no, the child is quite all right," answered Mrs. Derbyshire in a tone of surprise. And then she asked a curious question. "Are you *quite* sure," she asked, "that you haven't told anyone else what you told us, Duchess? I suppose that you and whoever told you the story have discussed it together?"

Mrs. Derbyshire's hostess grew rather pink. "I have not mentioned the matter to anyone but to you and Bettine. The Duke warned me that to do so would be dangerous." Then she came over to where the older woman was now sitting. "What is the matter?" she exclaimed. "If there's nothing the matter with the little girl, why are you so distressed, dear Mrs. Derbyshire?"

"Because," said the other in a shamed voice, "I'm afraid that Bettine, without of course meaning to do so, did a very wrong thing. Under the seal of secrecy, she told

her friend, Mrs. Ingleside, what you had told us, and Mrs. Ingleside seems to have repeated it, right and left. And, and——"

"Yes?" said the Duchess a little sorely.

"—Major Barcombe is most terribly angry, and he's going to bring an action against you, Duchess, for slander!"

The Duchess threw back her head, proudly. "I don't mind that! Even if it will cause me some unpleasantness I shall never regret what I said, if it causes a cruel woman to be shown up for what she is." Vaguely she remembered the old adage, "The greater the truth, the greater the slander."

"But Mrs. Barcombe isn't cruel!" exclaimed Mrs. Derbyshire in an hysterical tone. "Major Barcombe is sometimes cross to the children, but *she* always takes their part! I felt that I couldn't believe the story your friend had told you, and I was right. Mrs. Barcombe is a most good-natured, amiable woman. When Major Barcombe came to see my husband about the gossip which is causing them such distress, he insisted on the Rector seeing everyone in The Small Manor separately, and alone. Believe me, whoever told you that story has got hold of the most extraordinary mare's-nest."

"Then do you mean," said the Duchess slowly, "that there's not a word of truth in what I heard? That Mrs. Barcombe has always been kind to her little step-daughter?"

"Yes, I do mean that! When they had a governess who was rather severe with the little girl, it was Mrs. Barcombe who insisted on sending her away, though Major Barcombe was all for keeping her! I myself saw the parlourmaid, in fact the woman asked to see me. She came yesterday, and she told me she'd never known a lady more kind than Mrs. Barcombe."

The Duchess muttered, "What an extraordinary thing. What terrible lies someone has told."

"My husband wanted to see the Duke, in order to tell him of Major Barcombe's threat of bringing an action. But I thought it far better that I should come and tell you, all the more so that I'm very much afraid that the spreading of the slander, which makes it so very serious a matter, is really owing to my daughter. I can't think," she said helplessly, "what could have possessed Bettine to have done such a thing."

It was on the tip of the Duchess's tongue to say, "It was the more foolish and dishonourable, as Bettine gave me her word

that she would treat my confidences as absolutely secret." But she was far too generous and too kind a woman to utter those true words aloud.

"I'm afraid," said Mrs. Derbyshire, in a lugubrious voice, "that you'll get a letter from Major Barcombe's lawyers to-morrow."

"It was very kind of you to come to-day," said the Duchess. "And if what you have told me is true—if I really maligned Mrs. Barcombe that day I came to tea with you—I will of course write her a letter of full apology which she can show to anyone she likes."

"That won't satisfy Major Barcombe!" exclaimed Mrs. Derbyshire. "He is determined to bring the matter into court. He declares that in no other way will his wife's character be cleared."

The Duchess began to feel angry. "I confess," she said rather sharply, "that the whole thing seems to me a storm in a teacup! I've spoken of the matter to no one but you and Bettine, and I'm willing to apologise to Mrs. Barcombe."

"I wonder, Duchess, if you would mind telling me who it was that told you that extraordinary story?"

As the Duchess remained silent, Mrs. Derbyshire went on, a little quickly, "My husband feels that Major Barcombe has a right to know who it was that so maligned his wife to you."

And then, for once, the Duchess behaved with prudence. "I don't think," she said slowly, "that I ought to say anything till I have consulted the Duke. If it's really true that Major Barcombe intends to bring the matter into a court of law, then I'm sure you will agree that I ought to be very, very careful as to what I say, even to you, my dear old friend."

"I think you're right," said Mrs. Derbyshire at once, "and I want to tell you that the Rector did his very best to make Major Barcombe understand that you had spoken to me from the highest motives. But he would listen to no reason, in fact he is beside himself with anger."

"I suppose you are quite, quite sure that there is absolutely no truth at all in the story?" asked the Duchess.

Somehow it seemed to her quite impossible that any human being should have written the anonymous letter she had received without something having occurred to justify its contents.

"Yes," said Mrs. Derbyshire firmly. "I am sure that nothing has ever happened to

justify the telling of such a story. I assure you I should have been relieved if we had found out that Mrs. Barcombe was even—well, you know, Duchess?—old-fashioned in her methods as to her stepchildren! But she is, if anything, too kind. By the way, perhaps I ought to tell you that she is much more sensible about the whole thing than is Major Barcombe. But of course the poor woman is a good deal distressed. She cried bitterly when she talked to me about it, and her one object is to find out who could have said such a cruel thing about her!"

"What can I do but offer to apologise, and to take everything back I said?"

"I suspect," said Mrs. Derbyshire uncomfortably, "that Major Barcombe thinks they have a right to some kind of monetary compensation. He went up to London the day before yesterday and saw his lawyer. Good solicitors always try to stop any kind of lawsuit, but his lawyer, so my husband says, evidently egged him on, and made him think he could get very heavy damages."

The colour rushed into the Duchess's face. "Oh! Is that why he is going to take proceedings? Well, if our lawyer says something ought to be paid, of course I shall be ready to pay whatever is regarded as fair and just."

Mrs. Derbyshire shook her head. "I oughtn't to have said that. Though Major Barcombe is very fond of money, he is genuinely angry, indeed furious!" She got up. "May I slip away without going through the Long Library?"

"Why, yes, of course you can!"

When the Duchess took leave of her old friend, "Don't look so unhappy, dear Mrs. Derbyshire," she exclaimed. "I evidently made a fool of myself. But I can't do more than admit that I did, can I?"

When she came back to her guests the Duchess felt seriously perplexed. But though she was anxious and worried, she was yet, such being her nature, truly glad that she had been wrong with regard to Mrs. Barcombe and that lady's stepchildren.

She had had, in a sense, such a happy and such a sheltered life. All those who knew her loved her, and many who did not know her had a very kind feeling for her. No doubt she had acted with foolish impulsiveness, but she told herself that, in spite of Mrs. Derbyshire's woebegone look, an ample apology would surely meet, and more than meet, the case.

As the afternoon and evening wore on, she made up her mind to say nothing yet

disturbed, though he said lightly enough, "Laura? Do you remember that any-



"Bettine Gunston got up; she had achieved everything, and more than everything she had hoped to achieve."

to the Duke. She had reason to think that his mind was full of some question or problem—she suspected connected with public affairs; and she remembered the wise saying, "Do not trouble trouble till trouble troubles you."

Even so, it was with a feeling of great relief that, when looking over her letters the next morning, she saw that there was no lawyer's letter among them. But alas! her joy was short-lived, for when the Duke joined her, she saw at once that he was

mous letter which arrived about a month

ago—something to do with some people called Barcombe?" And then, without waiting for an answer, "Did you speak to anyone of the matter?"

"Only to Mrs. Derbyshire and to her daughter, Bettine Gunston."

"Then one, or probably both of them, have blabbed," he said shortly.

Slowly, reluctantly, she said: "Mrs. Derbyshire came over here yesterday, to tell me there's no truth in the statements

"I've had a letter from his lawyers this morning, and from what I can make out an apology won't satisfy him."

"I suppose," said the Duchess, "that they have a right to compensation, if, as the Derbyshires declare, the anonymous letter was false from beginning to end."

"I am afraid, my dear, that though in a sense they are out for compensation, they want the case to go to a jury. However,"



contained in that anonymous letter. She confessed that

Bettine repeated what I told them, and she says Major Barcombe is very angry——"

and he slightly raised his voice, "you did what any decent woman would have done in your place on receiving such a letter." And when he said that, the Duchess realised that he must, indeed, think the

matter very grave not to be what, to herself, she called "cross."

"May I see the letter?" she asked in a low tone.

He came up and put his arm round her shoulders. "I'd rather you didn't see the letter, my darling. I want you to leave the whole thing to me."

"After all," she objected, "it's been my mistake! It's nothing to do with you, James. In fact, I think it was very impertinent of them to write to you about it at all!"

"Do you?" And then he smiled, a wry little smile. "You're evidently unaware that I'm responsible for your actions. Did you never hear of a tort?"

"A tort?" she repeated. "No, never. What does a tort mean?"

"Rub up your French, dearest! If you commit a tort—in other words, if you slander some innocent lady, as I fear you did this time, your husband is held equally responsible with you."

The Duchess looked at him, and horror and dismay were in her face. "Is that really true?" she said. "Do you mean that you must be dragged into this affair?"

"Yes, of course I shall be dragged into it. Surely you don't think it would have made me feel particularly happy if you had to fight a case of that sort alone? It's far better it should be 'The Duke and the Duchess' than 'The Duchess' alone."

"Oh dear!" That was all she said; and yet she felt terribly distressed, more distressed perhaps, in a sense, than she'd ever felt about anything that concerned only herself.

The Duke saw how unhappy she was, and suddenly he exclaimed, "Don't look so miserable! You and I will go up to Town together to-day. Sharpe is a pillar of strength, as I've often had occasion to find, and as you'll find the moment you see him. I should think Major Barcombe is not at all a nice chap, judging from the tone of the letter that he's allowed his lawyers to write."

But, alas! though Mr. Sharpe was, in a sense, a tower of strength, he was not able to say much that was consoling to his noble clients. And, as the days went on, and the usual interminable interchange of letters began to take place between Major Barcombe's lawyers and the Duke's lawyers, it became very clear that Major Barcombe, as the Duke tersely put it, was out for blood. It was not an apology he

was seeking, it was not even a considerable sum of money. What he was apparently determined to do was to hold up the Duchess to public execration as a great lady who, with no foundation to go on, had maligned a neighbour whose one wish in life was to be not only good, but super-affectionate to her husband's children!

Acting on Mr. Sharpe's advice, the Duchess did not reveal the source of her information. "We will keep that," said the solicitor, "till the very last moment open to us. If the case ever really comes into Court, which I still hope," he concluded with kind eyes looking at Her Grace, "may be avoided, then we will produce the letter."

To say that the Duchess was rendered unhappy by all that was happening is a poor way of describing the anguish, the remorse, and the shame that assailed her. The only thing that gave her a slight measure of consolation was the loving-kindness of the Duke, and the wholehearted sympathy of her children. But in one thing the Duke differed entirely from his lawyer, for he would have produced at once the anonymous letter which had caused all the trouble. He even went so far as to say one day to Mr. Sharpe, much to that gentleman's surprise, "To my mind that vile letter was written by someone who knew Major Barcombe before he married his second wife, and it is, I think, the work of a jealous woman. I strongly advise that we make inquiries concerning Major Barcombe's life as a widower."

Mr. Sharpe shook his head. He could not but remember that the Duke had consulted him about a former anonymous letter, one which had certainly been written by a jealous woman, and he made up his mind that in this matter his client was simply going by what had happened before. And he was surprised that so shrewd a man should be so influenced. But reluctantly, for his firm was not the sort of firm who ever had occasion to deal with private inquiry agents, Mr. Sharpe did set afoot certain inquiries.

Meanwhile the Duchess grew more and more miserable, more and more anxious, more and more unlike herself. It seemed to her such a terrible thing that she should bring disgrace, for that was how she looked at it, on her husband's name! Also, she was a very feminine woman, and the thought of having to appear in the witness-box terrified her. Many a time the Duke told himself what a pity it was that the matter could

not be fought out in the good old way, that is, with pistols for two, and breakfast for one, between himself and Major Barcombe!

IV.

"EVERYTHING is quite all right." Such was the astonishing message sent from London by telephone to Her Grace from His Grace. And, in the most mysterious manner, within about half an hour of the receipt by the Duchess of that message, not only the whole of the Castle, but it may almost be said the whole of the town which nestles at the foot of the Castle, and creeps up towards the Castle, had become acquainted with the tenour of that reassuring sentence.

It is strange, and sad to see, how even a very few weeks can alter a human being! Many of those to whom she had been kind—always kind, boundlessly kind, for nigh on thirty years—had noticed sorrowfully that the Duchess really did look, at last, as if she were no longer a young woman; though even now no one would have taken her for a grandmother.

"Everything all right?" The Duchess had burst into tears when her old butler had handed her the Duke's message with such a look of pleasure on his usually stolid face. "Oh dear!" she had exclaimed, "I wonder if everything really *is* all right?"

"His Grace came himself to the telephone, Your Grace. He was sadly put about when he heard that you were out."

Well, that certainly did look as if "everything was all right," for the Duke had an intense dislike of the telephone. In fact, since it had been installed in his London house he had used it only four times, and the Duchess remembered, now, that three of the four times had been concerned in some urgent way with one of his sons. If only he had said a little more! If only he had given her an idea of how everything had fallen out! She felt so ashamed, so mortified, and even now so miserable, to think of all the trouble she had caused, and to so many people.

Even now, great as was the relief, the Duchess still felt quite unlike herself while waiting for the Duke, and never had time seemed so long. The minutes were like quarters of an hour, the quarters of an hour were like hours, and the hours seemed like days.

At half-past eight she had her dinner brought up to her boudoir, and then after she had forced herself to eat something she sent a message to know if Mrs. Parsleep

could see her for a few moments. And when the Duchess went into her old nurse's sitting-room, Mrs. Parsleep did not wait, as she always did wait, for Her Grace to make the first advance. Instead, she tottered forward, and threw her arms round her mistress. "So it's all come right, dearie? Always I will say that you were splendid over it all, even if you did make a little mistake. I heard the other day one of those impudent under-housemaids say I was like a witch, and I said to myself, 'I wish I was a witch, for then I could cast an evil spell on that there major!'—He's no officer, let alone no gentleman, but he'll come to a bad end—never you fear—that sort of grab-all generally do."

"Don't say that, Parsey. Major Barcombe had a right to feel very angry," said the Duchess in a low voice, "though I think he might have been content with a public apology. I have tried, now and again, to remind myself what *I* should have felt if someone had accused His Grace of being cruel to his children! Or, worse still, of allowing someone else to be cruel to them."

"I always knew it would be all right in the end," said Mrs. Parsleep firmly. "God isn't One to let the wicked prosper, for all that talk about the green bay tree."

And when the Duchess slipped away, back to her boudoir, to wait for the Duke, she felt happier than she had done for weeks.

At last she heard his firm footsteps in the corridor. Then, as he opened the door, she stood up, and there was a strained, almost a wild, look on her face.

"Well, Laura? All's well that ends well, my dear! And now I hope you'll never give the matter another thought—"

He came up to where she was standing, he took her face between his two hands, and then very solemnly he kissed her.

And then the Duke did what was for him a rather odd thing to do. He began, that is, to what she called to herself, fiddle about with her soft hair.

"James!—Don't! What *are* you doing?"

"I saw a white hair on your head the other day," he observed. "I'm looking for it. There it is—another one, too. Come, come, Laura, that will never do! I can't have a white-haired wife."

He was pulling them out, and she counted. One, two, three, four, five—

"I'm afraid it's cost you a very great deal of money, James," she whispered sadly.

"It would have been cheap at ten times the price. Besides, as a matter of fact it's only cost about the price of a diamond ornament Harrington brought to show me the other day, and which I thought of for you. You are always giving people things—and no one ever gives you anything!"

"I know I've given you a great deal of trouble," and she began to cry.

"Wouldn't you like to know what made the gallant Major give in?"

"I should indeed!" and she looked at him eagerly.

"We found out, the day before yesterday, who wrote that anonymous letter. The writing on the envelope gave the writer away. It was a lady we both knew——"

"Never! As dear Parsey would say——"

"Yes. And what's more, I forced her to confess the fact to Major Barcombe. Of course she wouldn't have done so if we, Sharpe and I, hadn't made it very clear to her that her villainy would come out in Court."

"Who was it?"

"Can't you guess? I guessed fairly soon." And then he said quietly, "Bettine Gunston."

"Bettine Gunston? But how astounding! What made her do it?" And then she added, "I do hope the dear, kind old Rector and her mother will never know——"

"As things have fallen out, they won't. As to what made her do it? She and Major Barcombe had been secretly engaged in the days when he was a gay widower, and she a very lovely girl. So she hated the inoffensive woman he actually did marry. Being what she is, she did not realise that you would try and rescue the child. She thought the letter would only 'put you off' the Barcombes."

"Wasn't Major Barcombe very angry with her?"

The Duke waited a moment. "In a way, yes. But I think he was also touched, and a little flattered. She almost went on her knees to him. We've got her to thank for the settlement out of Court." Then in a very different tone he exclaimed, "Let's forget all those horrible people——"

He walked across to the door and locked it—"Taking a leaf out of your book, eh?"

Then he came back to where she was still standing, and taking her hand, he sat him down in a deep easy chair, and pulling her down he cradled her in his arms. "I've something else to tell you!" he murmured. "Something that's got to do

with me, for once—and which has also come all right."

She nestled down in his arms. It was years since she had sat on his knee, and that though they were a very affectionate pair. "What do you mean, James?"

"There's something," he answered quietly, "that I've always longed for—longed for so much, Laura, that I've never even spoken to you of it."

"Something you've longed for, my love?"

There came a queer jealous dart through her generous heart. She hadn't known that the Duke had ever had a secret from her, and it hurt her to know, now, that he had.

As he said nothing, she repeated, "What is it you've always longed for, my dearest?"

"You'll know when I tell you what it is that I've got. And the funny part of it is, Laura—that I really owe it to you!"

"To me? Then I'm afraid it can't be worth having," and she really meant what she said.

"The P.M. sent for me yesterday to ask if I'd take on a certain job—a big job. He began by saying that it was the sort of—well, post which couldn't be offered to a bachelor, as the woman's part, in these days, was very important, too. And then——"

"And then?" she echoed, looking up into his face. "What happened then, James?"

"He said that there was only one woman he could think of who would fill the part to perfection, and that that was the Duchess of St. Andrews. Not only was she a miracle of tact and kindness, without a single enemy in the world, but she always 'got on' with everybody, and was equally popular with Jew, Gentile and infidel."

"Do stop!" she exclaimed. "I'm sure he never said all that——"

"He really did," said the Duke gravely. And then there came a most peculiar look over his face, as he observed in a detached tone, "Mr. C. has offered me India."

"India!" She gazed at him in wonder. "Do you mean that all your life you've been longing for *India*?"

"Well, yes. I think I may say it has always been the one thing I thought I'd like. But I never thought I'd have the chance. But now—well, they're going into the highways and byways, looking, we must hope, for the right men——"

"Did you think this might be coming your way?" she asked suddenly.

"I have had a suspicion of late that something of the kind might come my way."

"It wouldn't have done," she said slowly,

"if that horrible case had ever gone into Court—would it?"

"I never did believe it would ever come into Court," he said stoutly, if irrelevantly.

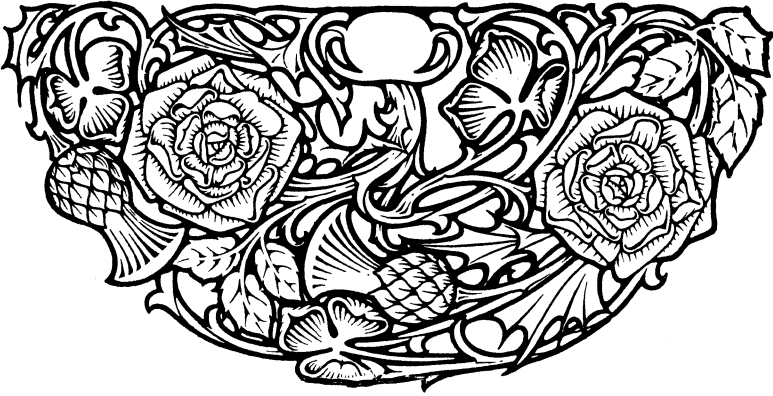
"Thank God you didn't tell me anything about it," she exclaimed. And again she began to cry. "The suspense would have turned *all* my hair white——"

She slipped off his knee, and ran and unlocked the door. "I must tell Parsey!" she exclaimed.

"Parsey, always Parsey!" he said in a cross tone. Then, "I must be the first to kiss the Vicereine—though I believe there's no such person——"

A few moments later she exclaimed, "D'you remember how shocked Gerald was when I quoted that dear old Yorkshire saying, 'A kiss without a squeeze is like an apple without cheese'?"

And the Duke knew by that remark that the Duchess was herself again.



ELUSIONS.

MY room of dreams is very near the sky;
 The tumult of the street sounds faintly there;
 But always they are clambering up the stair—
 The little unborn songs that plead and cry
 "Ah! sing us, for we do not want to die
 Who have not lived!" Poor little songs, so fair,
 Yet so perverse! for oft when in despair
 I try to coax them in, they shrink and fly
 Out of my reach, still sighing "Ah! to-day
 Sing us to life!" and softly fade away.
 O little songs, could you but understand—
 Your faint ethereal beauties will not stay
 Enshrined in words, and you must ever stray
 Upon the verge of your dim shadowland.

ELEANOR RENARD.

AFTERGLOW

By ANDREW SOUTAR

◉ ◉ ILLUSTRATED BY T. H. ROBINSON ◉ ◉

THERE may be something more tangible in dreams than the flitting of fugitive desire through a dormant brain.

Like his father before him, Reuben was a chainmaker. Unlike his father, he was imaginative, yet he never appeared to resent, even if he recognised the symbol that his trade afforded, the tethering of a restless spirit to a domestic anchorage. In the Black Country, where he toiled with others at forge and anvil in front of the row of smoke-grimed cottages, there was little food for imagination: there was less encouragement for a man to think of higher things than the welding of links. But without the stimulus of agitator or bellicose propaganda, Reuben groped laughingly, even joyously, through the drabness of his environment for the sunlight that might lie beyond.

Long before he married he had learned to cherish dreams inspired by the very chains he welded. While others cursed the flaw in the metal or the thirst in their throats, he wondered where this or that chain might go when it had passed from his hands: he told himself that he could feel the heaving of the ship to the tide while the mighty cable held her to her anchor: he could see her lying off the palm-fringed beach in the tropics: he could smell the incense rising from spice and foliage.

Of an evening, when it was summer-time, he would sit on the wooden bench he had made for himself outside his cottage and there he would read books on travel which he had been able to buy cheaply or which the vicar had loaned him. He had no craving for the minor pleasures of his acquaintances: he was an alien to the keeper of the inn where the others drowned their sorrows. He saved his money with miserly care, depositing every available penny in the savings bank, and feeling himself a league nearer his objective every time the book showed that another pound had been added to the heap. Some day, he told himself, his dreams would come true, and

he would venture far across the world and see the wondrous places of which he had read in the travel books.

Physically Reuben was a giant even at twenty-four. His hairy arms were knotted, and as powerful as the massive iron links he forged. The expanse of chest was a warning to any sceptic who might feel disposed to laugh derisively at Reuben's dreams of travel. Like most big-framed men, he was beautifully docile of temper: the laughter of a boy-child was in his throat, the gentleness of a delicate woman marked his manner in the presence of weaker mortals.

And he had made sufficient to warrant his leaving the forge and striking out for himself in a new world, when he realised that the dark, slumbering eyes of Mandy were apt to turn in his direction more often than was modest; her gaze was bent upon him in no unkindly way.

They met in the dusk and walked together far beyond the limits of the smoke-pall that lay on the district. He told her of his dreams, quoted from the books which he had read, and vowed that one day he would take her with him.

They married, and she came to live in the cottage which had been his parents' before him. The little heap of savings which he had accumulated was sorely depleted by the step which he had taken, but he reasoned that with her love and sympathy he would be able to work harder than ever before.

"Do I hold 'ee back, Reuben?" she asked as he lowered his book and wondered if those stories of Canada's sea of yellow grain were really true; if down off Colombo the waves were of sapphire blue so that the golden sand could be seen at the bottom of the ocean's bed; if yonder, in the West Indies, the sun was never clouded over; if down the Pacific Slope the earth gave of her choicest fruits. . . . "Do I hold 'ee back, Reuben?"

"Not so," said Reuben kindly. "There be no joy in havin' what a fellow wants

most of all if there be nobody to share it wi' him. That's fair an' as it ought to be. We'll make a trip next year. See if we don't."

There came a boom in trade because of the rumblings of war, and Reuben worked like a Trojan. Also, there came a child to Mandy, and in the ecstasy of contemplating this new responsibility he forgot the inroads on his savings and the ambition of his life. It was a boy, and soon Reuben discovered another channel along which his imagination might drift to his unspeakable pleasure. Mandy's interest in the dreams was

"And monkeys an' tigers an' that sort?"

"More'n you could count, sonny."

"Have you been there, dad?"

"Well, not exactly, but I know it's true, 'cause it's in th' books."

"Shall we go, dad, when we got plenty o' money?"

"Leave it to me, sonny."

It may be that it was thuswise he inculcated a love of travel in the boy (but that is to anticipate). Sonny was four years of age and the savings were mounting again to the desired level when a sister came to join him. Reuben had to start again at his



"Reuben nursed him on his knee outside the cottage."

blunted by the demands which were made on her time by domestic duties, but soon the boy was even more receptive than she had ever been. Reuben nursed him on his knee outside the cottage, and told him of the wonderful lands that lay beyond the sea.

"Now, this 'ere island I was tellin' 'ee about," he would say, "lies in latitood thirty-six, an' if you was to steer a course due south from . . ."

"Real cocoa-nuts growin' there, dad?"

"Real as real, sonny. Ye should see th' nigger boys shin up them trees after 'em."

beginnings; another year and a third child, a boy, was added to the tax.

The chainmaking industry suffered a period of depression, but the dreams were as vivid as ever, although the big limbs were beginning to feel the strain of working feverishly towards the consummation.

The little girl, Bella, was an unending source of joy to Reuben. Soon she was old enough to understand at least a little of the narratives he had to relate, and as her curly yellow head rested against his breast his imagination seemed to receive an impetus of which he wasn't conscious when he nursed the firstborn, James. She,

too, must travel and see the great big world which had been made in six days. By the time Bella was a woman, he said, he would have made sufficient to send her out as a lady—fit to take her place among the best in the land.

The educating of the children on a slightly higher plane than that of others in the district demanded the sacrificing of many little personal comforts by Reuben and his wife, but they accepted the demand in a spirit of cheerfulness. When James was sent to a boarding-school in a town twenty miles away, even the vicar began to wonder if the big chainmaker was justified in his ambitions.

"I have my dreams," said Reuben, with quiet insistence. And he added, with a wishfulness that bordered on the pathetic: "When I was a boy I wished that I could be sent to a good school so that when I got out into th' world I could hold me own wi' th' clever ones. An' th' better scholar you be th' more you can appreciate th' wonders of th' world."

Once, when the vicar visited the town—one afternoon in the late autumn—he was surprised to see Reuben "prowling stealthily," as he afterwards said, in the vicinity of the boarding-school. It was unusual to find Reuben anywhere save at his forge, and the vicar followed him to where he was gazing over the fence surrounding the school playing-field. The chainmaker blushed like a maid at her first dance. He had come to see his boy play in a football match, and preferred to look over the fence: perhaps it wouldn't do to let the boy's school-fellows know that his father was just a chainmaker.

Both boys did remarkably well at school. When they came home for the vacation they were subjected to much questioning by the father: it was as though he doubted that their schoolmasters knew as much as he did about the world. If the boys corrected his geography, if they placed this town or that one in its rightful position on the map, he would shake his great head in doubting manner and insist that "it wasn't so in his day."

It was through the kind offices of the vicar that James, the firstborn, began his career as a railway clerk. Within twelve months he had yielded to the importunities of a friend who was going to Canada to work on the railways there. Reuben received the news with stoicism that strengthened the mother. He took from his savings

the portion to which he thought the boy was entitled, and there wasn't a tear in his eyes as he said good-bye. "We'll go out to him shortly," he said to the weeping mother as she rocked herself in her chair. "Haven't we always said we would?"

The next to go was Bella, now like unto a glorious half-grown rose whose petals are beginning to open to the sun. Again, it was the vicar who was instrumental in advancing the ambitions of Reuben another step. Bella went as governess to the children of an Embassy official; the education for which Reuben had paid fully qualified her for the position. It was said to him:

"She may have to travel, and we trust that you will not stand in her light."

"Travel," said he, and laughed deep in his throat, "why, my little Bella's been all over the world along o' me."

The youngest boy, Timothy, developed a remarkable aptitude for mineralogy, and went out to Portugal in the employ of a British company.

The nest was empty. The fledglings were gone. Mandy, in her middle-age, dreamed her own dreams in the drab little cottage, while Reuben swung his hammer—perhaps not so lustily as of old—at the anvil outside. Mandy dreamed of children lying in the crook of her arm: Reuben's imagination transformed the sparks from the forge into fireflies flitting in tropical foliage; and the roar of the bellows was the musical crashing of the surf on the beach of a sunlit isle.

The treasure-house had been emptied of its store, but the will to work towards replenishment was as strong as ever it had been. He and Mandy had given three children to the world; they had laboured for them; they had made sacrifices for them; they had striven to make the world happier and wiser for their having lived in it; they could say for the judgment of posterity: "We tried." And kings have deserved their crowns for meaner triumphs.

Reuben was feeling the weight of the years when the youngest child left the shelter of the roof tree, but he was not old: the spirit of adventure was as young and forceful as ever. The stars still found in his eyes the wonderment of the child who would look beyond; the majesty of the morning as it broke in the east appealed to his soul as a call from another world. He encouraged Mandy with promises of travel; now that they had been relieved of responsibilities

they would speedily acquire the wherewithal to realise their dreams.

Time passed slowly for Mandy, but all too quickly for him. He chafed as he marked the greyness of her hair: the fear that she might not be able to enjoy the privilege when it should be granted became a torture to his mind.

When Bella wrote to say that she was going out to Canada with her master and mistress, Reuben said, in amazement: "Is it possible that our little Bella has grown up to womanhood an' be goin' to travel like that?"

And Mandy, as she rested her hands on the window-ledge and looked out across the blue-grey scrap-heaps in the near distance, said:

"The next we'll hear 'll be her weddin'. 'Twould be wonderful if we could get out there in time for it."

James, the firstborn, was the most faithful correspondent of the three children. He had left the railway service, and was now engaged with a firm of wheat exporters having their offices in Winnipeg. His letters home stirred the pride and ambition of his father as the bellows the smouldering coal-dust in the forge. He read them aloud to Mandy, and stored them in quaint places in the sitting-room of the cottage—under the worn leather seat-cushion of his armchair, behind the clock that had stood on the mantelshelf since the day he married Mandy: his memory was extraordinarily alert; if the vicar or any work-mate should come in for a quiet chat, Reuben would sway the trend of conversation to (say) the wheat crop. And he would appear to hazard a guess at yield or price, and if there was the slightest indication of argument he would turn up the cushion of the armchair or grope about behind the clock for those precious letters, and he would mutter: "Well, all I can say is that my boy be in the business, and in a letter he sent me six months ago he gave me the figures, plain as plain. And you'll agree he ought to know." And he would quote from memory before producing those letters.

Bella's employers took up residence in Montreal. Reuben found a new subject for conversation; he dilated on the coincidence that she should find herself in Montreal while her brother James was in Winnipeg. He had the map of Canada before his eyes, and he would illustrate the profundity of his knowledge by making the armchair near

the fire Montreal. . . . "An' this (Mandy's chair) you can have for Winnipeg. Now, the Canadian Pacific Railway comes down here, it do—right across them mountains . . . call that sewing-machine o' Mandy's mountains, will you? Back here, where these books be, is Edmonton. Ah, a fine place Edmonton. When Mandy an' me go across to 'em, just to see how they're gettin' on, although there's no need to worry about that, we shall travel on that railway. Mebbe I shall have the fancy to go on to 'Frisco. Here's 'Frisco, next th' cupboard door. An' we shall mebbe put in a bit o' time at Vancouver. . . . There you are! Under th' window-ledge—that's Vancouver. Amazin' thrivin' place."

A continent in miniature was reflected in the furniture of the cottage and the design of its walls. On a small table, facing the window, was a model of a sailing ship in a glass case: Reuben bought it when the children were very young, and he and they had sailed many seas in it. To-day it held a greater significance for him than when he had bought it; although he never mentioned it during these discussions with his friends, his gaze lifted towards it whenever he described the travels that were to be his and Mandy's.

Bella married well—a government official. She sent them a newspaper account of the wedding ceremony. Reuben took it, post-haste, to the vicarage, and thence to the near acquaintances who might have doubted that his girl could do so well. Mandy remained by the fireside and wept into her apron.

When Reuben returned he was as excited as a schoolboy at a football game. The time had come, he said, when they must count up their savings and see if it wasn't possible to say good-bye to the district and sail into the sunshine. Mandy stayed the sobs that were in her throat and smiled on him: in the ecstasy of contemplating the voyage he failed to mark the pallor of her cheeks and the manner in which she pressed her hand to her left side. That pain had been becoming more acute during the last two years, but she hadn't breathed a word that might give him alarm.

Reuben got the savings-bank book from out of his locker, drew a chair up to the deal table, and began rather laboriously to calculate the amount standing to their credit. Three hundred pounds! It was a noble achievement in face of all the responsibilities they had shouldered. He said to Mandy,

raising his head from the book and gazing at her admiringly :

"There's only one woman in all th' world who could have helped me save that, Mandy, and that's you." Mandy smiled, and there were tears just behind that smile. Only she knew what the saving and scraping had

James wrote them a long letter about Bella's wedding, enumerating the "distinguished citizens" who had attended the reception. He, himself, was rapidly realising the promise of the land of promise : he had been made a junior partner in the export firm, and he told of the



"He had learned to cherish dreams inspired by the very chains he welded."

cost her. That pain in her side, for instance. She fancied, too, that he was not the man he used to be—his shoulders were slightly bent ; the cheeks were inclined to be hollow. Well, well. The sunshine out yonder might soon restore him ; she had no thought for herself.

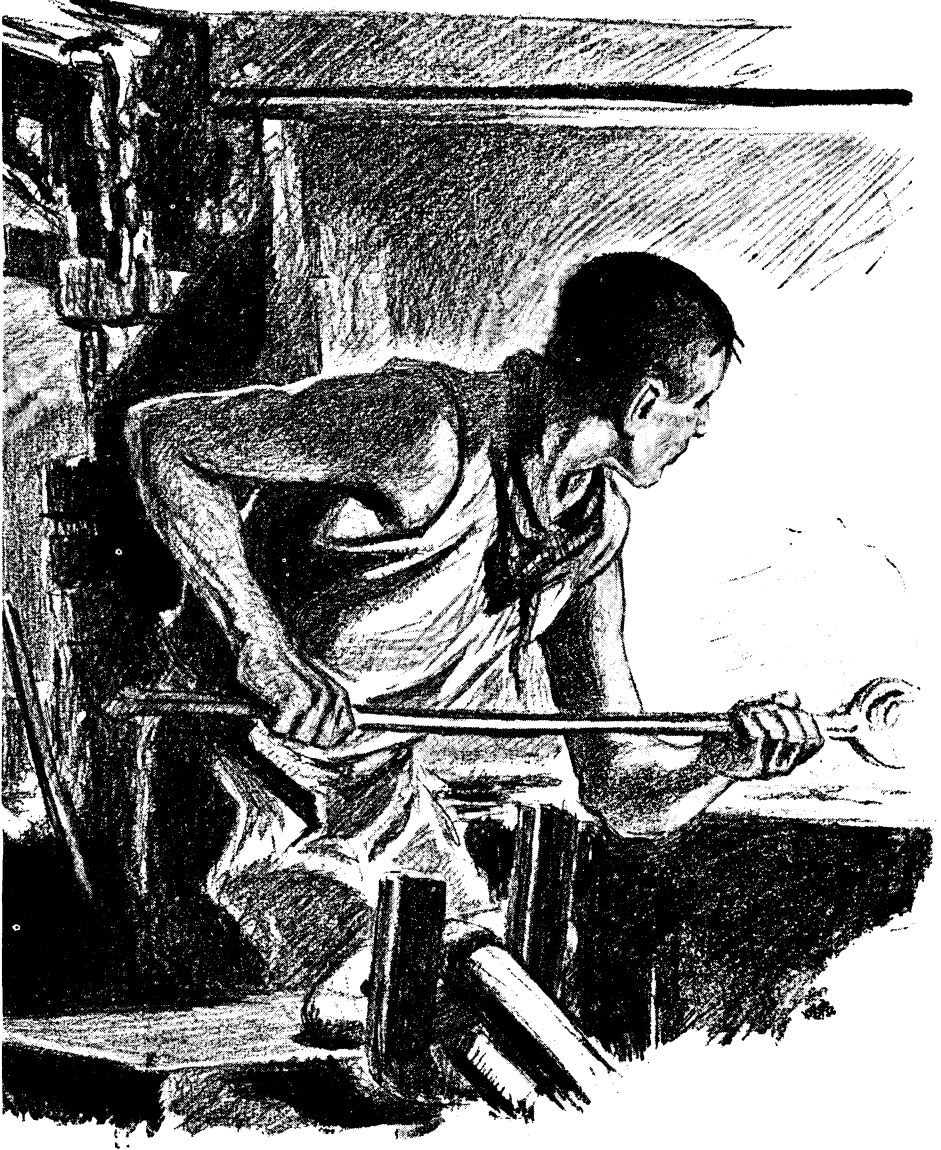
dollars that were accumulating to his credit.

Mandy took to her bed about the time that Reuben was working out the itinerary. He had obtained whole bundles of pamphlets from the shipping and Colonial agents, and was making himself thoroughly acquainted

with routes and fares and topographical notes of interest. He was dazed that night when he carried her upstairs after she had fallen from her chair to the floor. All he could say was:

"Mandy, woman! Mandy, woman! What ails ye?"

suspicious, he feared that she was too frail to be moved: he knew that the insidious pain in the side was cancer, but he tried to convince Reuben that it was probably no more than a bruise resulting from a blow: she might have collided with a corner of the table during her daily work in the



She was ill for six months, lying in bed the whole of the time, never uttering a word of complaint and never leading him to suspect that she might never take that trip after all. The doctor insisted on a nurse being engaged: he would have ordered Mandy to the seaside, but, without betraying his

cottage: she might have strained herself when, foolishly, she insisted on helping him in the chainmaking after the manner of women in the district.

Mandy died in the spring. For a long while before she was taken she lay in a semi-comatose condition, her mind too hazed

to understand the murmurings of Reuben as he sat by the bedside and told and re-told stories of the distant lands to which he meant to take her when she had recovered. When he returned from the cemetery where she had been laid he examined his resources, and vaguely calculated that he could rebuild his little fortune in a matter of two years, perhaps three. He wrote to James and begged him to exercise great tact in conveying the news of her mother's death to Bella.

"Go about it very careful, boy," he wrote, "for women can't stand suffering same as we men." There was pathos, for James, in the postscript: "It be raining here, boy. Always raining. No sun like you got."

It was the vicar who took it upon himself to advise James that Reuben wasn't the stalwart he used to be. "He is a man who has worked strenuously all his life," he said. "He has kept his eye on the goal of a lifelong ambition and never spared himself. He has toiled as few men toil, but his reward on this earth, at least, is the possession of three fine children."

James tried to get into communication with his brother Timothy, but he had left Portugal and was believed to have gone south, towards the Pole, with an exploration party of which he was the geologist.

Then James took train to Montreal to see Bella and suggest a plan that had been maturing in his mind for six months: this was long after the death of the mother.

He found Bella installed in surroundings that would have struck awe into the people at home. Her husband had risen high in his profession and she had risen with him, for her education had been sound and her beauty was undeniable. A large circle of acquaintances waited upon her with obsequiousness not less pronounced than that of the servants in her household. She received James with restrained affection as though it were indecorous to betray warmth. She listened to his plan the while her restless fingers warned him of her impatience.

"My dear James," she said, "to dream of bringing him out here is preposterous. He'd be out of his element entirely." She didn't add that the presence of Reuben in that house, at any rate, would be distinctly embarrassing to her. There was no need to add it.

James looked away from her as he said:

"I'm sorry that you feel like that, Bella;

but I suppose you know best. We ought to do *something*."

Bella nodded and sighed. There were responsibilities that couldn't be evaded: she was fully aware of that. And no one should say that she didn't know her duty. She wrote out a cheque for fifty pounds, and suggested a similar gift from her every two months. Could more be expected of her?

James tore the cheque in halves.

"I'm going to England," he said, "and I shall bring him back with me. You needn't worry, Bella; I'll keep him with me, so there'll be no risk of his disgracing you."

And James did sail for England. Old Reuben was sitting indoors when he arrived, although it was midsummer and the heat from neighbouring forges made the atmosphere stifling. His own forge fire was black and cold: he had done no work for two months, not because of enfeebled ambition, but because the strength was gone from the hairy arms, and the shoulders could no longer stand the strain of bending over the anvil or swinging the sledge. He was old, very old, James realised. And the fine manly spirit of years ago was gone. He cried when James came in and placed an arm around his neck—cried like a sentimental old invalid.

When he was told that the time had come for him to travel with the sun, he brightened, even laughed outright. And he asked about Bella.

"She's waiting for you, dad," said James.

"I'll not be a burden on her, boy. She knows that—eh?"

"She'd never complain if you were," James lied. "But she and I will always be quarrelling, because she'll want you when I want you, and as she and her husband have a better place than I, she'll probably have you more often."

Reuben chuckled. "It'll be grand," he said. "And mebbe you'll find time to travel a bit with us, James? Right across the wheat belt and the Rockies. An' I'd like to take just a squint at 'Frisco. 'Serene, indifferent to fate, thou sittest at the—at the western gate.' How does it go, James? You remember the lines?"

James set about the task of completing arrangements for the journey. He was going to take his father back with him, and he was determined that he should have every comfort that money could buy on the way. Reuben's excitement was a reward in itself to the son. To Reuben himself it was

dangerous. He plucked up sufficient strength to walk out among his friends and acquaint them with the imminent fulfilment of his dreams. He was taking leave of them. He was going out to the West, travelling with the sun.

James returned from London where he had been to see the shipping agents. That was on the Monday afternoon—the late afternoon. He found his father sitting in the armchair which he had drawn to the open window. Reuben was dressed in the rusty-black clothes which had served him as “best” for years; he had a small bundle of tourist agent’s pamphlets in his hand. He was waiting—ready and waiting.

“We’re going down to Southampton to-night,” said James, with enthusiasm. “The ship sails on the first tide to-morrow, and we must be aboard to-night.”

“Aye,” said Reuben, but he didn’t attempt to move from his chair.

“The trip across the Atlantic will do you a world of good,” said James, “and when you see the glories of Canada you’ll feel the years drop from you.”

“Aye,” said the old man again, and he brushed his lips with the back of the hand that was free; the other was holding tightly to the pamphlets. “Hardly seems real—does it, boy? Not after all these years.”

“It’s real, all right,” said James cheerfully. “Wait till you see the wheat belt! Wait till you see the morning sun breaking over the snow! Oh, dad!”

And then Reuben gripped the arm-rests of the chair and pulled himself to his feet.

He was staring straight in front of him—through the window to where the slag-heaps lay like the refuse of the scornful.

“I’ll stay here, boy,” he said with sudden resolution. “Aye, I’ll stay here.”

He straightened himself until he was the semblance of the young Reuben who could pick up a sledge-hammer with the tips of his fingers and twirl it around his shoulders.

“I’ll stay here,” he said again, and there was something very beautiful in the strength of his voice.

From outside came the clang of hammer on anvil as neighbours brought their day’s labour to a close.

“I like that,” said Reuben, inclining his head. He groped for his boy’s hand and held it with surprising firmness. “I reckon they was all dreams,” he said. “Me goin’ away when God meant I was to stay and work just to keep things goin’. Look, boy! Under that chair there be Winnipeg, an’ just there ye’ll find Montreal, and back o’ th’ sewing-machine ye can have—ye can have—aye, ye can have Edmonton.” He crumpled a little, and James lowered him back to his chair; but he kept his gaze fixed on some object that he could see from the window.

“All dreams,” he said again, as his boy held him upright in the chair. “But ain’t they big dreams, boy. I reckon this is my world—and Mandy’s.”

And as he said that “Mandy’s” he half turned his head so that his cheek lay against that of his boy.

The afternoon had travelled on. And the sun was in the west.



AUTUMN AND YOU.

ACROSS the purple of the heather’s sea,
Just by the pine-tree clump you came to me;
In the far distance, where dim mountains lie,
A golden sun slipped down a golden sky.

About our feet the burnished bracken spread;
An autumn sky arched softly overhead;
The trees shone golden on the sunlit plain,
Your kiss turned Autumn into Spring again.

L. G. MOBERLY.

FIFTEEN MINUTES

By "ARTEMAS" •

• • ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING. • •

"IN fifteen minutes, by yonder marble timekeeper," announced Jimmy, glancing at the clock on the mantelpiece, "I am going to ask you to marry me."

"Really!" said Phyllis. "That will be nice. . . . But why the delay?"

"Fifteen minutes," explained Jimmy, "seems to me a reasonable time for the eloquent preamble with which I propose to lead up to the main theme. Just at this moment you are clearly in no fit mood to reflect on a subject so serious as marriage. You are, I regret to say, inclined to be flippant."

"Not flippant, Jimmy; just a trifle excited. It must be temperamental: the least thing excites me."

"That is all the more reason why you should have an opportunity to compose yourself," he continued imperturbably. "An offer of marriage requires dispassionate consideration. A girl—of your type especially—is prone to be swayed by sudden impulse."

"Oh, Jimmy!" she said protestingly.

"Please don't interrupt. . . . As I was saying, the first essential is to cultivate a cool head and perfect clarity of vision. Having taken these initial precautions, no difficulty should be experienced in deciding whether the proposal comes from full heart or whether it is merely a desperate endeavour to manufacture polite conversation."

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed. "But how do I find that out?"

Jimmy looked at her in surprise.

"Have you not a tongue in your head?" he demanded bitingly. "Then, ask!"

"Of course," she murmured, crushed.

"Marriage is one of the most serious states known to man," he went on sententiously. "Modern scientists, I believe, compare it to that utilitarian invention, the lobster-pot, a contrivance notoriously easy of entry but markedly retentive in operation."

"Oh, Jimmy!" she breathed. "Fancy you knowing all that about lobster-pots!"

He accepted the compliment without blushing.

"On the other hand," he went on, "we must remember that just as many lives have been blighted by the rejection of the right man as by the acceptance of the wrong. Hasty action is usually the cause of this appalling blunder. A good rule—which was much in vogue in our grandmother's day—is to count twenty-seven slowly before definitely turning a fellow down. It is wonderful what a difference it often makes."

"Why twenty-seven?"

"Because twenty-seven is the number fixed by immemorial custom," he said shortly.

"But why answer at once? Isn't it better to temporise?"

"That is just what you are doing when you count twenty-seven. You can't keep a man on tenterhooks longer than that. It isn't done—at any rate, not after you have had a quarter of an hour's intensive preparation."

"But there are so many pitfalls," she sighed. "Ever since I was twelve I have been terrified of succumbing to a temporary fascination. You know, Jimmy, I should hate to have my old age embittered by the discovery that I had all along been married to the wrong man."

"The point," he answered airily, "obviously presupposes a proposal from the wrong man. In your case, I am glad to say, it does not arise."

"You smooth out my little difficulties so easily," she said gratefully. "And you are so convincing. I feel now that if ever I marry, it will be entirely at my own risk."

"A negligible risk," he assured her.

"So, I suppose, the lobsters think."

"Please don't speak of lobsters."

"But I love them, Jimmy."

"Then you must not. They're indigestible."

"Very well," she said submissively. "I dare say you're right." She yawned with quite unnecessary ostentation. "It was

perfectly sweet of you to call, Jimmy," she told him, "and I have enjoyed our little talk ever so much. You must come again when you can spare the time."

"A nasty, vicious hint," he commented, "that is doomed to fail in its purpose. I

"Oh, sir!" she said imploringly. "To keep a poor maid in suspense!"

"Nay. See, it requires but a few minutes——" He looked at the clock. "Great Jehoshaphat! The beastly thing has stopped."



"Jimmy switched round in his chair whilst the reverberation of the first stroke still hung in the air. She was closing the case on the dial."

refuse to be hurried; I ignore your clumsy goad. For understand, madam, I am a man of my word. Until the massive timekeeper behind me indicates the hour of four, the question which is even now trembling on my lips must remain unspoken."

She nodded sadly.

"I did not like to tell you, Jimmy. Father overwound it yesterday. . . . And you said a quarter of an hour by *that clock*—b-by yonder marble timepiece."

"But——"

"No, Jimmy. I cannot ask you to

break your word. That would be weak—of both of us.”

She put a handkerchief to her eyes and walked behind him that he might not see her agitation.

“I’ll have the clock repaired. I’ll take it away with me now,” he said seriously.

A faint movement and a stifled sigh were her only reply.

And then the clock struck four.

Jimmy switched round in his seat whilst the reverberation of the first stroke still hung in the air. She was closing the case on the dial; the fingers indicated the hour of four with indisputable accuracy.

“Those clock repairers are so slow,” she explained serenely, moving to a seat. “And now, come along and propose.”



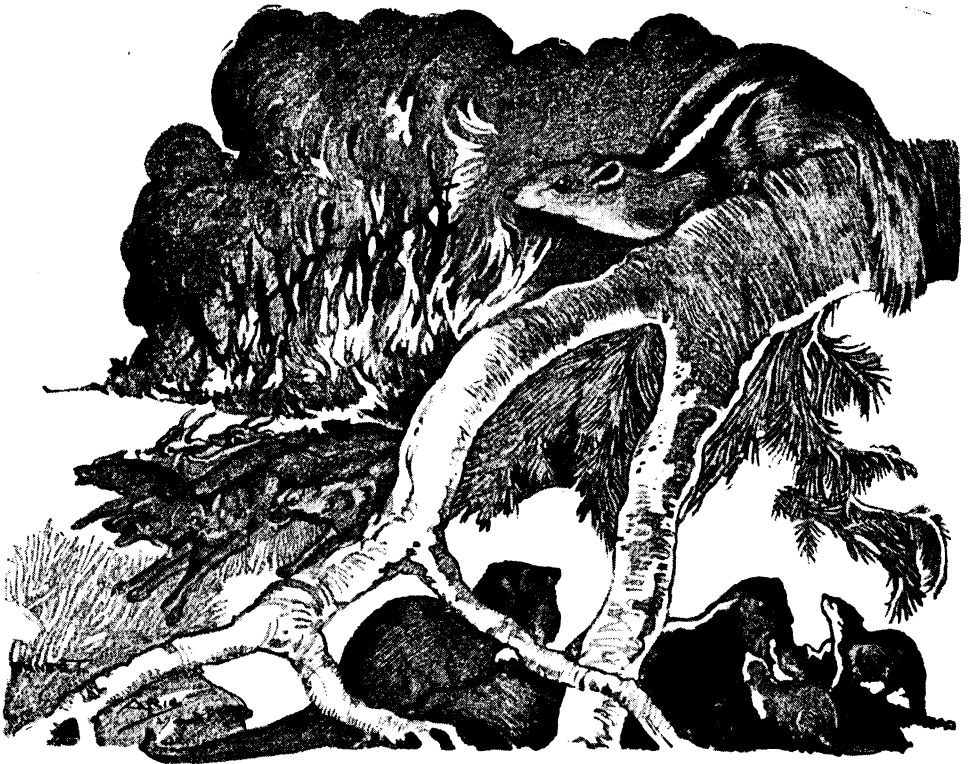
INARTICULATE.

WHEN all the quest is over,
The dim dilemma done,
And I, who loved the light, must lie
Forgotten by the Sun;
Oh, know that I was desolate
For words I never penned,
And that my heart was charged with songs
Unuttered at the end.

The restless heart within me
No quietness may seek
When every hour that passeth
Constraineth her to speak,
And every beauty taken
By the glad ear and eye
Calls to the heart so clearly
That she must speak—or die.

So shall I live, bewildered;
And one day I shall come
With all my words unspoken
To die—and still be dumb.
But, from the tired body,
Hushed now and hid from sight,
Some slender flower shall spring and thrust
Her brave way to the light.
And, as she bends to whisper
To Earth that holds her fast,
The poor heart buried deep shall be
Articulate at last.

DEREK G. BARNES.



"The distant jungle was burning, and the mongoose family joined in a vast concourse of animals and reptiles."

NO QUARTER : GIVEN :

By W. GILHESPY

◉ ◉ ILLUSTRATED BY ERNEST ARIS ◉ ◉

THE baby mongoose came to the door of the family residence and had his first glimpse of the wonderful world into which he had entered some three weeks previously.

It was a very beautiful world upon which the bold little eyes gazed, and surely it affords no fairer sight than that of the Indian jungle under the white radiance of the full moon. But the magic of that lovely night had no charm for Mungo. The intricate shadows cast by the feathery leaves of the tamarisk tree on the glistening white sand did not interest him in the least.

That which did claim his attention was the shadow of an owl with a wing-spread of four feet as she flew over the prickly-pear bush and alighted on the stump of a babul tree. Mungo never moved. He must have known he would have made only a mouthful for that owl, the wits of the tiniest mongoose being quite as sharp as his teeth. He knew, too, that he was quite safe under his prickly hedge. Even when the owl screeched, not a muscle of the little red body moved.

He was a fortnight older when the family were compelled to seek fresh quarters. The

winds of late April and early May had been like the breath of a furnace, and the grass, dead leaves and fallen branches were tinder dry.

Instead of resting after their night's hunting, Mungo's parents were strangely perturbed. They chattered to each other, loudly and incessantly. Then one or the other would run to the mouth of the lair, sniff the sultry air and return to their offspring. Presently the five babies were bundled out and made to understand that they must follow their parents, and that without delay.

The distant jungle was burning and the mongoose family joined a vast concourse of animals and reptiles that were hurrying into safety, the smaller beasts and reptiles into such refuges as were available and the larger making for the open plains to the north of the jungle.

A herd of cheetah deer bounded past, stopped and turned as though undecided, then hurried on, regardless of the tigress that was coaxing two cubs to follow her. Foxes, jackals, hyenas and wolves ran almost side by side with the timid animals on which they preyed. A sounder of wild-pig crashed headlong through the undergrowth, heedless of aught that lay in their path. Pea-fowl shrilled their raucous alarm notes and flying foxes blundered stupidly in the unaccustomed sun-glare.

The mongoose family went slowly on account of the babies. Overhead hung a heavy pall of thick smoke, drifting sullenly over the fugitives and increasing their terror. The mother mongoose picked up one of her babies and the father another, hurrying ahead with them. Mungo and the other two were left disconsolate, the bottom had dropped out of their little world.

The children of the jungle are born with sharp wits, and the life of the wild sharpens them to a very fine point. Trotting along with their parents, they had paid little regard to the wild beasts that overtook and passed them. Now these looked very formidable indeed. The bison would have trodden on them without compunction; there were hundreds that would have eaten the whole five in normal circumstances; but those which they feared most were the porcupines, probably because they grunted and squealed their dismay as they ran.

They hurried on, following the direction their parents had taken. Mungo dropped his sharp little nose to the ground and

instinct—the inherited experience of countless ancestors—helped him to follow by scent. It was rather a slow process, but he managed to keep the trail somehow and had not gone very far before his mother came back and picked up his little brother. Then came his father for Mungo's companion, and he was left to run alone.

But not for long. The sand seemed to burn his little feet, and, even close to the ground as he was, the air was suffocating. He was almost alone now. The other animals had run ahead—or perished. The tall elephant grass roared as the flames licked it up and hurled glowing wisps in advance—ominous heralds of their destructive might. He could not see and his powers of scent had failed; only because a mongoose does not know what funk is, was he able to endure.

Then something seized him and carried him down—down—down into the very bowels of the earth, it seemed to his numbed senses. It was his father, but Mungo did not know that; he was asleep when he was dropped on a heap of weary, slumbering babies, and he slept till the swift Indian twilight fell, till the moon looked down on a few thousand acres of smoking, spluttering embers and countless forest trees, now hideous in their charred nakedness.

Hunger awoke him and made him drag his weary little limbs to the open. His mother had brought fresh-killed food and his father had gone out to have a fight—several fights—as many fights as he could get. He got as many as even a mongoose wants.

The refuge he had chosen was a hole under the foundations of what had once been the palace of a king. A few acres of fallen masonry had left a mound where little vegetation could find sufficient moisture to live during the dry weather, so the fire had passed it by. Thousands of fugitives had taken refuge there, among them more of the mongoose tribe than Father Mongoose cared to have around him. He might have been a little more tolerant had it not been for his family, but none of the jungle folk care to have rivals in the vicinity when they have babies to feed.

Some subtle instinct warned the others of the reason for the enraged parent's fury and they hurried from what he chose to regard as his particular hunting grounds. There was food to spare for all. This stony mound had provided a refuge for hundreds of small animals. There were rats, mice,

hares, a few squirrels, and, better than all these, there were hundreds of snakes.

The rodents were too much afraid to fight or flee. The snakes were very much afraid, consequently very angry—fear always makes the venomous snakes angry. For the most part these reptiles were harmless, for the non-poisonous snakes far outnumber those that are venomous. Father Mongoose did not stop to make a selection, he just took them as they came. If they fought, well, so much the better—he loved a good fight. If they succumbed quickly, he and his could begin to eat them the sooner. The mongoose is a philosopher in his way.

As the embers burnt out and the scorched earth cooled, the rodents and reptiles—those that had survived—began to migrate. Now the mongoose family must needs go farther afield to find food. Fortunately, the fire had not crossed the canal a hundred yards away, for a cultivated clearing lay on the farther side. The mongoose family reached this by crossing a stone bridge farther down the canal, and here they settled in a hole in the canal bank.

Here, by the edge of the slow-moving stream, among the standing crops or the scrub and thorns that fringed its banks, their lessons were continued. These meant, chiefly, learning to catch and kill, also learning *not* to be caught and killed. There were others besides—many others—and there is little slurring over lessons in the hard school of the jungle. There is a right way and a wrong way of doing most things, and the children of the forest who choose the wrong way seldom live long.

They needed more food than their parents were able to catch and bring to them, and so had to hunt for their own, though they came back to the family residence each morning. Though the full-grown mongoose often hunts by day, the youngsters generally slept.

Mungo soon learned that there was a great difference between hunting under his parents' guidance and catching his prey unaided. He learned that he must climb many trees before he could find a green parroquet's nest, that hunting the bushes for small mammals requires patience and perseverance.

He had both—every mongoose has. He had spells of bad luck, when his prey managed to elude him, or when some other mongoose was a little before him. But these unlucky nights did not come often, and, in any case, they served to sharpen his wits as well as his appetite.

Perhaps his longest fast followed the evening when he almost made up his mind to rob the owl's nest. His appetite was unusually keen, even for him, so, when he sniffed round the hole of a mighty banyan tree and knew that a colony of squirrels lived among its boughs, he decided that that tree was worth climbing.

In a hole where a limb joined the trunk he found the owl's nest. The nestlings hissed and retreated as the mongoose appeared, and Mungo was rather undecided. Whether he thought—and rightly—that eating an owl's fledglings was a dangerous venture, or whether his fastidious taste forbade his feasting on their rank flesh, Mungo himself never knew. A shadow came between himself and the moon, the mother dropped the mouse she was carrying, hissed as she swooped and her talons closed on air. Mungo had gone.

He had slipped under the branch as she struck, lost his hold, and fell on a lower limb. Like a flash he was round the tree-trunk with the owl close behind, and again his wits and his speed saved him. Before she could fling her body backwards and bring her sharp claws into striking position Mungo had found a hole under the bark. It was not a very big hole, but he was not a very big mongoose and it had to suffice.

Some subtle instinct warned him that he had better remain hid till daylight, and he lay there till morning. Very, very slowly he pushed his little red nose out, very, very slowly his head followed, and he waited to see what Mother Owl was doing. She was not to be seen, so he balanced himself on the edge of the hole for the fraction of a second and dived into the brushwood below, where no owl could follow.

By a devious route, dodging from cover to cover, he reached—not his home—but what was left of it, which was very little indeed. During his absence, probably in the early morning, some low-caste hunters had dug up his brothers and sisters and carried them off for sale. One of them fell into the hands of some wandering outcasts and spent the rest of her life fighting sham battles with captured cobras. Three brothers and sisters were sold in Bombay market—one escaped on board ship and had jollier times in the hold of that ship than the rats had. The others found their future owners among the customers of a shop in the Tottenham Court Road, and the owners found the jolliest pets that anyone can have.

Mungo never saw his parents again. Probably they were not at home when the hunters called, but he did not wait to

snake, but it was Mungo's first, and he felt as proud of the achievement as does a small boy who has just caught his first minnow.

find out. He had to fend for himself now, and that left him little time for anything else.

He had his first encounter with a snake when he climbed a tree to hunt squirrels—rather a hopeless task, even for a mongoose, for no living thing can dodge round a tree-trunk or run along the under-surface of a bough as quickly as the small striped squirrel.

Mungo hesitated when he saw the snake. He seldom did hesitate when hunting, but this was his first encounter and he knew that, on the precarious battle-field afforded by the thin branches of a tree, he would have little opportunity for that wonderful footwork which alone can keep a mongoose out of reach of the snake's lightning stroke.

The snake did not hesitate; it would have been better for him if he had. He



"A shadow came between himself and the moon, the mother dropped the mouse she was carrying, hissed as she swooped and her talons closed on air."

just dropped to the undergrowth and tried to wriggle away. Mungo followed and killed it among the scrub. It was a small, harmless

He wandered still farther into the jungle, coming at last to where the monsoon floods had formed little lakes in the low-lying land.



Here he had good hunting, for many small animals had been driven from their lairs and burrows by the rising waters. Instinct told him that he would do well to find a home on higher, dryer ground, and he set out on his search. He found one among the roots of a date-palm, one that suited him admirably—that it was already tenanted by a rat only added to its charm. He dined

on the original occupant and entered into occupation of a very desirable country residence.

As the winter came, wild-fowl began to haunt the pools, but Mungo's early lessons had not included instructions in catching them. Like all the flesh-eaters, he did most of his hunting by night, and occasionally found the remains of a duck that some

prowling fox or jackal had left. Wild-duck makes a toothsome meal, but Mungo was somewhat fastidious and preferred to hunt and kill his own food.

Luck gave him his first chance. He was manœuvring for a position from which to seize a rat that was picking the bones left by a jackal that had feasted on a mallard when something swooped and Mungo saw that rat carried aloft in the talons of the great grey owl. Mungo was no coward, but he certainly was no fool, and he crouched motionless. There was something that struck a chill even to his dauntless little heart in that swift death. There had been no warning shadow, no whirring sound from those great, soft pinions, no pause while those curved talons sank in the yielding flesh and the rat was borne aloft. There was red rage as well as dread in the bright little eyes that watched the owl away, but still he crouched, waiting perhaps for another rat to approach those bones.

While he waited his chance came. A pair of teal swam slowly among the shallows, came ashore and looked cautiously round before preening their feathers. There was nothing to affright them; the dwarf thorn and the tuft of withered grass could not have hidden either fox or jackal, though they were sufficient cover for a mongoose. As the drake's bill preened the down beneath his wing Mungo sprang.

A few minutes later he decided that teal made a supper that ought to satisfy any reasonable mongoose, and waited patiently every night at the brink of one pool or another for the ducks that came ashore to perform their toilet. He learned to discriminate. Teal was good, so were pochard, widgeon and many others; the shoveller's flesh had a fishy taste, the black diver was wholesome but rather tasteless, the mallard was best of all. The mallard, moreover, was big enough to struggle and give a young mongoose a little trouble, but that, of course, was just the kind of trouble that Mungo liked.

He had his unlucky nights, nights when the ducks came ashore at any spot round the edge of the pools except just the one where he was waiting for them. Then he had to wait for them till daylight or kill rats. He was not partial to daylight hunting; there were more hawks by day than owls by night, and he feared both. There was very little he did fear, but a bird that swooped without warning and struck eight curved talons into any of the smaller animals

was something that even Mungo was wise to avoid.

He had an encounter with the biggest he had ever seen, and—never wanted another. He had seized a mallard drake, but the bird struggled, buffeting the slim, brown-red body with his powerful wings. Mungo tightened his grip when the hawk swooped and struck, drove his talons into the mallard and beat the air with mighty wings as he slowly rose.

Mungo had escaped injury from those steel-like points, but one of his legs was tightly gripped between the hawk's talon and the mallard's body. Low over the lake the two were carried, and still the mongoose struggled until he freed his imprisoned limb. Hitherto he had most carefully avoided owls and hawks, but this one had offered an insult which no animal of his tribe could forgive. He must avenge it.

Holding on by teeth and claws, the mongoose climbed up the body of the raider and fastened his teeth in the flesh under the great wing. The bird dropped the drake and tried to rid himself of his unseen foe. Mungo was too far back for the cruel, curved beak to reach him, and worried his way in till, with one convulsive quiver, the great wings drooped and the two began to fall through space.

The mongoose was still gnawing with savage gusto when he struck the water and was carried under by the weight of his dead foe. It was his first experience of the kind—probably his first swimming lesson, and it chilled his fighting fury. He came gasping to the surface and climbed on the hawk's body, where he shivered till they floated near the shore.

When the voice of spring called the feathered migrants to the great lakes beyond the Himalayas, when the pools dried up and food began to get scarce on the open lands, Mungo followed the rats, mice and hares that had gone to feast on the ripening wheat and pulse on the cultivated lands. He had killed small snakes, but now they had gone to the cool recesses of the jungle, which was an additional reason for his leaving his winter hunting grounds.

As he returned to his hole under the roots of the palm tree he saw a big cobra curled up enjoying the morning sunshine. He had never known what it was to do battle with the larger snakes, but he knew exactly how to attack. He had inherited the knowledge, and he had seen both his father and mother at work.

He sprang—just the fraction of a second too late. There are times when a snake can be seized before he has time to assume the defensive, especially after a full meal. But this one moved with the speed of lightning and the mongoose just escaped a stroke from his poison-laden fangs.

Then began one of the fiercest fights ever seen, even in the Indian jungle—the arena of countless battles. It was a fight that must have but one ending, and each combatant knew it. The cobra was over five feet in length, primed with venom and fighting for his life. Yet not for an instant did the grim little warrior hesitate. He darted forward, but shot to one side as the vicious head lunged forward, tried to make an attack from the side, and again escaped a lightning stroke.

Then he changed his tactics. He had failed to get his grip during the first round, now he must fight till the snake could strike no more. The cobra can fight only with two-thirds of his length lying in a loop on the ground, balancing the third that carries the head forward with a speed so great that the human eye can scarcely follow the movement. It is not a position that he can hold indefinitely, especially when he must be striking all the time, so the mongoose kept him busy.

He circled round, keeping the enraged reptile continually turning to face him. Again and again he darted in, skipping out of harm's way as his adversary launched his counter-stroke, missing the sinewy little body by a hair's-breadth. That was all part of the game. A half-hearted, cautious attack would have enabled the snake to reserve his powers. As long as Mungo rushed in boldly the cobra must fight with all his energy.

The strain of continual circling and

ceaseless lunging without getting a blow home began to show, though the human eye could not have detected any decrease in the lightning speed or the vicious force of the snake's vain blows. But Mungo knew; it was what he had been fighting for.

Now he forced the pace, rushed round the snake with even greater speed, feinted and sprang clear, missing death every second, more by his wonderful ability to judge distance than by his amazing speed. Faster than the eye could follow went on that dance of death. Then came the last rush, the last counter. Mungo did *not* spring aside this time, he sprang straight *up*, allowed the wicked head to shoot underneath him, and, when it was withdrawn, went with it, for he had dropped on it and fixed his teeth in the neck just where it joined the head.

That was not the end of the fight, it was only the beginning of the end. The cobra lashed his head this way and that, trying to rid himself of the grim little incubus. Mungo held on with the last ounce of his strength—it was death to let go. He was bruised and battered, the breath nearly beaten out of his plucky little body as the cobra dashed him against the ground or the bushes. He could do nothing to mitigate the severity of the punishment, he could only endure. Then, as the snake paused for a moment, the indomitable little warrior shifted his grip and drove his teeth into the base of the skull.

For a very short while the squirming was more vehement, the lashings were increased, then they grew spasmodic. One more lightning grip, one more crunching bite, and Mungo rolled clear to lie panting until the convulsive writhings ceased. Then he began to eat his dead foe, commencing at the tail.

ALL HALLOWS EVE.

AT Hallowe'en, when trees grow bare,
The dead leaves stir and rustle there,
And eeriness is in the air.

About us house, and lawn, and tree
Are fast in spell of gramarye,
And quick with that we cannot see.

Yet eyes courageous, clear, and keen
Should see the ghosts of What-Has-Been
Abroad with shades of What-Shall-Be,

At Hallowe'en !

ANNE PAGE.

THE TURBAN OF SULTAN GIAFAR

• By E. CHARLES VIVIAN •

• • ILLUSTRATED BY J. R. SKELTON • •

"TAKE a seat, Mr. Coulson."

The fallow, acid-looking woman pointed to a long cane chair and seated herself in another. Coulson disposed of his five feet ten of muscle and bone in the chair indicated; so seated, he had a distant prospect of the little harbour of Sindanao, with its normal couple of coasting tramps, assortment of junks and sailing craft, and, in the foreground, roofs a-shimmer in the blazing heat of mid-afternoon.

"Mr. Mole has told you what I want done?" she queried, obviously in expectation of an affirmative answer.

Coulson shook his head. "Only that you might want something that might appeal to me," he answered.

"Well, then, I want you to find my husband," she stated baldly.

"You have some data to go on?" Coulson asked, after a pause for reflection.

"Of course," she agreed. "I don't know if Mr. Mole told you anything at all, but—"

"Nothing whatever," Coulson assured her. "He sent a chuprassi down to my place, and I went up to see him. He asked me if I were doing anything, and I told him I wasn't. Then—Mrs. Knight can put you on to something that might interest you. They were his words, and I came straight here from him."

"Well, then, this is it," Mrs. Knight began. "Mr. Mole and I agreed to give it out that my husband went on a shooting trip to avoid a breakdown, but I tell you in confidence, Mr. Coulson, that he went on a wild-goose chase to save the firm of Knight and Mole from breaking down."

Only by slightly raised eyebrows did Coulson indicate his surprise at the news. Mrs. Knight interlaced her fingers to stop their nervous twitching. It was not an easy confession to make, Coulson divined.

"You know the legend of Sultan Giafar?" she asked.

Again he returned a negative gesture. "I may have heard it," he said, "but there are so many."

"This happens to be true," Mrs. Knight said. "In the very early days, when the Portuguese first came, Giafar ruled the country round Sindanao. He wouldn't come to terms with the Portuguese, being an independent sort, so they deposed him and set up his nephew, or cousin, or somebody, and tried to capture him. But he escaped with his sword of State and his jewelled turban, and threw them both into Lake Ipang, up in the hills, before he killed himself rather than be caught."

"A commonplace story, for those days," Coulson observed.

"Eleven years ago," Mrs. Knight pursued unheeding, "my husband bought Giafar's sword of State from a wandering hunter for a mere song, and founded the firm of Knight and Mole on what he made of it, so you may guess it was a valuable thing. The blade was all rusted away, of course, but the gold and jewels of the hilt were intact. The hunter described where he found it in Lake Ipang, and—and it was the beginning of our fortunes. And when things went against us, last year, my husband began to talk about the jewelled turban. Gold tissue set with jewels, they say."

Coulson nodded. "But he didn't go after it?" he asked.

"That's exactly what he did," she answered, "over two months ago. And at the very worst, Lake Ipang is only ten days distant."

"But it's blind, wild country," Coulson observed. "He didn't go alone, surely?"

"He took one boy—Jim the black, we call him. Quite reliable."

"And you have heard nothing at all—in two months?"

"Nothing at all. Not even Mr. Mole knew, at first, that he was going on such a mad errand. 'Giafar made us,' he said to me, 'and Giafar shall save us now.' And he just went. Mr. Mole said it wasn't wise to wait any longer without taking action, and recommended you, if you'd go."

"I wouldn't undertake it alone," Coulson said. "Ipang wants reaching, and I don't see it as possible to pick up the traces any nearer."

She regarded him sourly, almost as if she distrusted him. "What do you suggest—what do you ask to make a thorough search?" she inquired.

"Four hundred dollars, to cover expenses for two of us and a Malay boy for a month," he answered, after deliberation. "Three hundred down, and the other hundred only in the event of our satisfying you as to what has become of—of your husband."

"Then you think he's dead?" she asked, with no show of emotion.

"Either dead or too badly injured to move," Coulson answered. "Else, he'd be back here."

She pondered, quite unmoved by the suggestion, and Coulson saw that she unclasped her fingers and made calculations with them. Unquestionably, he felt, the future of the firm of Knight and Mole was more to her than assurance of her husband's well-being; she looked inhumanly hard, this sallow woman, and in remembering stories he had heard of her Coulson felt less certain regarding Knight's demise or injury.

"I agree to your terms," she said slowly, "though it is a large sum. Mr. Mole will draw up an agreement, though, of course, we must rely on your sense of fairness, once you get into the jungle toward Ipang."

"Send one of your own boys as attendant—or find somebody else," Coulson suggested, with patent irritation. "Mole knows my name is good anywhere between Manila and Batavia, which is probably why he picked on me to send to you."

"Oh, don't take offence!" she urged crossly. "For our own peace of mind, we must know what has happened to him, though even if you find him in good health, I don't believe the firm can be saved. That in strictest confidence, Mr. Coulson."

"Then you don't think he's likely to find the turban of Giafar?" Coulson asked.

"Find it? Of course not! I did my

best to dissuade him from any such silliness. What he always needed was a little less romantic nonsense and a little more practical common sense. But there!" She rose, as if to indicate the end of the interview. "You can tell Mr. Mole I agree to your terms, Mr. Coulson."

II.

TOGETHER with his friend and coadjutor, Mr. Josiah Drinkwater, Coulson sat up on a high plateau that overlooked Lake Ipang, just three weeks after his interview with Mrs. Knight. They had dined off wild pig, which was fairly plentiful in the jungle, and had pitched camp for the night.

Southward from their height they could see an unbroken sheet of jungle green, beyond which Sindanao lay hidden in a coastal hollow; a solitary coasting steamer, a mere dot at this distance, travelled very slowly across the shining furrows of the sea.

"Peaceful, ain't it?" Josiah observed.

"What is?" Coulson inquired, rather morosely.

"Ah!" said Josiah, abandoning his appreciation of the landscape. "So it's got you too, has it?"

"I wish we'd found him," Coulson answered. "That extra fifty dollars apiece would have made all the difference. As it is, we lose."

Josiah Drinkwater sat up, in order to get at the pocket in which he kept his cigarettes. He was lean and middle-aged, a smallish man with a humorous twinkle in his faded grey eyes, though as he regarded Coulson his expression was one of concern at his companion's tone.

"We've done our derndest," he said, "and I may say our very derndest. Allowing that Knight was about as much use as a tomato cutlet in this sort of country, still there were only three ways up to this lake, and we've scoured all three."

"With never a trace," Coulson agreed, with rather bitter energy.

"Maybe she'll think we ought to have dragged the lake, when you report to her," Josiah suggested.

Coulson looked round at the lake as he sat. Nearly a mile in circumference, it filled a cup in the side of a range of hills, and beyond it the crests rose, clothed in green that the still water mirrored.

"Or drain it and shovel the bed over," Josiah completed.

"There are not many lovelier scenes

than this in all the East," Coulson remarked abruptly, "and yet——"

"And yet either of us would cheerfully swap it for Trafalgar Square on a wet night," Josiah said, with energy. "I'm about fed up, anyhow."

"Umph!" said Coulson.

"Fourteen blessed years I've sweated my soul out and cussed mosquitoes between Penang and the Arafura," Josiah pursued, "and every new year I tell myself I'll strike it rich before next January, and book me a passage back home. Lord, man, it's pretty enough, but it eats your soul away when you think of what's over there, past the sunset!"

"Shut up, you idiot!" Coulson adjured.

"It's not finding this wandering boy that's put the tin lid on it, for me," Josiah explained, "though two hundred dollars—what's two hundred dollars? It's the sense of doing your best and being grinned at by fate just once more—that's what it is."

"Probably," Coulson agreed.

"And it ain't even two hundred, since we can't find him—only a hundred and fifty apiece—though since that black shadow of sin bolted and left us we shan't have him to pay. Maybe I did larrup him a bit too hard, but the beggar was too lazy to scratch himself, anyhow."

"Well, we start back to-morrow morning," Coulson said, with weary finality. "I think I'll report to Mole—don't feel like facing Mrs. Knight and telling her we've failed."

"Coulson, d'you think Knight did a guy over the hills to save getting the length of her tongue any longer?"

Coulson shook his head. "I think he found what he was looking for, and the sight of it was too much for Jim the black—the boy he took with him," he answered. "Knight wouldn't bolt—he wasn't that sort."

"Oh-ah!" Josiah yawned. "I would, if I'd married her, and I don't blame you for going to Mole. But could Jim the black get away with it?"

"He'd go to Fleur," Coulson said. "Sure to sell at a profit, there."

"Maybe," Josiah agreed, "which leaves us just where we were, fifty each short of two hundred. Coulson, what'd you do if you had enough money to get out of this?"

"Do?" Coulson echoed irritably. "Why, get out of it, of course! You've had fourteen years of it, you say—I've had eight,

and I'd sell my soul for a sight of decent English people in a decent English home."

"Coal fires," Josiah said. "Hearthrug, curtains drawn—whisky peg down beside the chair on the carpet, evening paper crackling——"

"You blithering old idiot!"

"Or take a bus up to the Strand, and stroll into a music-hall after a nice little snack of oysters and stout——"

"If you don't shut up, Josiah, I'll bend this frying-pan over your bean," Coulson threatened. "What's come over you?"

"Fed up—fed to the teeth!" Josiah responded with sudden, vicious energy. "Look at it!" He swept a comprehensive hand about him, to indicate the glory of tropical forest and sea, and the mirroring beauty of the lake. "There's mugs—like I was once—would reckon this a joy for ever, and then some—but give me one honest half-pint of bitter in an Oxford Street bar, and take the lot! I won't ask for any change."

"Oh, we'll win out yet, both of us," Coulson answered.

But it was a formula from which the spirit had gone, and Josiah knew it as such. He heard the note of weariness in the words.

"Tell you what it is, Coulson, we're too honest, both of us. Here's you been doing your derndest ever since you got let down over that planting partnership, and me—I've never even robbed a dog of its back tooth. Too honest, that's our trouble."

"No chance to be otherwise," Coulson responded. "Else——"

"D'you mean it?" Josiah asked solemnly.

"Feeling as I do now," Coulson said, "there's not much I wouldn't do to make enough of a pile to get back decently. Cut out talking, Josiah—it'll be dark in a quarter of an hour. I'll take a stroll along the ledge, here, and then we'll turn in."

"Start for Sindanao to-morrow, collect our hundred and fifty apiece, and then make a plan to bilk somebody," Josiah said. "You do your turn along the promenade, and see if you can think out a slap-up swindle we could work together."

Coulson got up slowly, and sauntered, hands in pockets, to the edge of the plateau on which they had camped. Lank grass grew to within twenty feet of the edge, sparse and scraggy, and then the bare brown rock showed why no trees had taken root here. Looking over the edge, Coulson

could see how stunted bushes had rooted in crevices of the almost vertical cliff, and, more than a hundred feet beneath, green tree-tops hid the steamy unhealthiness

III.

JOSIAH went down on his knees on the bare rock, and peered at the criss-cross, shining marks on it.

"You're right, Coulson—metal made 'em. Nailed boots, sure."

"Knight," said Coulson.

"Was he doing a fox-trot, or the flat Charleston?" Josiah inquired as he rose to his feet again.

"Jim the black," Coulson answered significantly.

Josiah nodded slowly and repeatedly. "Got to grips just here," he said, "and they did their little step-dance. Coulson—look!"

On hands and knees again, he crept to the very edge of the cliff, and as he moved he traced with his



"Josiah went down on his knees on the bare rock, and peered at the criss-cross, shining marks on it. 'You're right, Coulson—metal made 'em. Nailed boots, sure.'"

in which he and Josiah Drinkwater had searched the forest tracks for any sign of Knight.

"Hopeless," he said to himself, as he paced eastward along the pavement-like edge of the cliff. "He'll never be found. Jim the black——"

Musing and movement alike terminated abruptly, and for a minute or more he stood, staring down at the rock before him. Then he turned and cupped his hands about his mouth:

"Josiah! Josiah!"

finger along the scratches on the bare rock. Coulson observed him almost indifferently.

"I have looked," he said.

Josiah lay on his stomach and peered over the edge. Then he got up and returned to where Coulson stood.

"Knight went over, anyhow," he said. "But there's no sign, down there. Coulson, we've got to get down, and earn that other fifty apiece."

"In the morning," Coulson agreed.

"There's moon enough to go to sleep by, but not enough for that trip, and the last of the daylight will be gone in ten minutes or less."

Josiah, who had been looking at the jungle roof, turned suddenly.

"Coulson, supposing he found it! Else, Jim wouldn't have gone for him and pushed him over."

"Well," Coulson said slowly, "in that case, Jim got away with it, and once he gets to Fleur, or somebody of that sort——"

He started back toward their sleeping-bags and remnants of a cooking fire, and Josiah followed him. Presently, with the fire well made up in view of the possibility of leopards during the night, and plenty of wood handy, they buttoned the sleeping-bags over themselves.

"Coulson," Josiah remarked, when he had settled himself, "if we could have laid hands on *that*, now——"

"Go to sleep," Coulson advised. "We've got to find a way down that cliff in the morning."

"It would have meant passages home, and plenty capital over to set up a fried-fish shop, or even buy a plumbin' business," Josiah reflected.

"Maybe," Coulson agreed, "and maybe it was worth next to nothing. Anyhow, it's pretty certain Jim the black got away with it."

He lay awake long after Josiah's deep, slow breathing announced that he slept, for their talk of the possibility of going home had stirred an ache that rendered sleep difficult. At near on midnight he got out of his bag to replenish their fire, and for awhile squatted by the blaze; far to southward the sinking moon turned the sea to silver tissue, and the flame from the logs before him bent and swayed in the night breeze.

"Passages home!" he muttered. "I'd pawn my soul for that."

IV.

THEY made a bundle of the sleeping-bags and the rest of their gear, except their rifles, and rolled it over the cliff at the point where Coulson had observed the marks on the rock. Watching, they saw how the bundle bounced and leaped down until the tree-tops hid it, and Josiah drew a long breath as the package vanished.

"That'll give us the location of the remains," he said. "Lord, but what a

smash-up! If he did go like that, Coulson——"

"Time for us to go," Coulson answered, and pointed along the cliff edge. "There's a point, there, gives slope enough to get down, going carefully. I'll go first, and you sit here and signal me over the edge till I get to where our bundle disappeared—then you follow me down, and we'll search on from there together."

The sun was a bare half-hour above the horizon, then. It was nearly noon when Josiah, dripping with perspiration, came down to where Coulson sat at the foot of the cliff, just where the shadowing fringe of the jungle encroached on boulders and rubble.

"Made it," Josiah remarked cheerfully, "though it ain't what you'd call a garden path with forget-me-not border. Talk about Napoleon crossin' the Alps—I'll bet this would make him wish he'd stuck to the flat."

"It's tricky," Coulson agreed.

"Found anything?" Josiah inquired, caressing a badly scratched hand.

Coulson nodded, without speaking. After a minute or so he rose from the boulder on which he had been sitting, and led the way into the comparative gloom of the trees. Josiah, following, came abreast of him as he stood, still silent, a score yards or so from his starting-point.

"By the piper of Pharaoh——!" Josiah ejaculated, and fell silent. Then, following Coulson's example, he took off his hat as he gazed.

Between two tree-trunks, just before them, a giant ant-heap rose nearly a man's height above the level of the forest floor, and between it and the point at which they stood there lay a heap of gleaming bones and tattered fragments of clothing. And, tangled in with the clothing, was something else—something that glimmered with a yellow sheen, in which sparkled points of glittering fire.

"Then he did find it!" Josiah almost whispered, in an awestruck way.

"Giafar's turban—she was right—Mrs. Knight was right," Coulson said. "Yet—she wouldn't believe in it——"

"How did he—what——?" Josiah asked.

"Jim must have grappled with him at the top of the cliff—probably stabbed him, for there's a hunting-knife there with the bones, and no sign of the sheath," Coulson answered. "By the look of it, Knight stuck to Jim, and they rolled over the cliff together."

"Ye-yes," Josiah agreed, "that was how. But—but the turban, Coulson. Man, we're made for life, by the look of it!"

"Are we?" Coulson asked drearily.

"Look at it!" Josiah said. "He found it—"

"Yes," Coulson answered. "That's it, exactly. He found it."

He went forward, and drew out the shining folds from among the bones that the ants had polished, after jackals had finished with them. Yard after yard of fine gold tissue, gem-studded, came up into his hands, and he retraced his steps, carrying it out to the strip of sunlight at the foot of the cliff, where he laid it on a flat, bare boulder, and brushed a couple of black ants off his hand.

Together with Josiah he stood and gazed at the thing, a gleaming miracle of spun gold, specked with the white blaze of diamonds, the dull red glow of rubies, and green fire where the facets of emeralds caught the sun. Half stupefied, Josiah stared at the glorious vision, flung by Sultan Giafar beyond the grasp of his conquerors, ages ago.

"Like—like the pantomime fairy in a transformation scene," Josiah gasped at last. "Only this—this is lovelier, Coulson. What'll it fetch, do you think?"

Coulson shook himself like a man wakening from a dream. "I think," he said slowly, "we'd better sort out Knight's bones, as nearly as we can, and bury what we know are Jim's somewhere here. Then we can take Knight's skeleton back to his wife, and—anyhow, we get the other fifty."

"Much better go over the hills and leave the bones where they are," Josiah suggested. "I dunno, though—perhaps you're right. They might say we murdered him, and set up a hunt for us. But if we bury the lot here, they'll never be found."

Coulson lifted a fold of the glittering wonder on the boulder, gently, almost caressingly, and gazed down at it. Then, taking it by one end, he folded it very carefully, foot by foot, until he had made a neat, compact package. This he took to the bundle of sleeping-bags and kit which lay within a few yards of the heap of bones, and there put it down on top of the bundle.

"Josiah," he said, as he turned and faced his companion, "we're taking all that's left of Knight—and the turban of Sultan Giafar—back to Mrs. Knight."

"Touch of the sun," said Josiah, and

shook his head gravely. "Here we've got a fortune to split between us—no half-larks about it, but a fortune. Your bargain with her was to find him—nothing in it about this bit of dazzle."

"You want to get back home?" Coulson inquired abruptly.

"Do I want to get back home?" Josiah inquired derisively. "D'you want to get back home?"

"I never wanted it as much as now," Coulson answered, with decision.

"Well, then—*get* back home!" Josiah pointed at the heap of gold tissue as he spoke. "There's passages for us both, and enough to live on when we get there. Jim the black is dead, and not a soul but us two will ever know who found that tin scarf. It's not as if the widow Knight was anything to shout about—the frosty-faced old geezer would skin a flea for its hide and tallow, and then sell the skeleton to a fertiliser factory, if she had the chance. It's up to us, Coulson."

"Yes," Coulson agreed, "it's up to us."

"Coulson," Josiah said slowly, "we two cut in on each other near on six years back, and so far we never as much as said 'Good gracious' to each other, except you may have had a word or two on me when I ain't exactly lived up to my teetotal surname. But now it sort of appears there's a bluebottle under your hat that's perilously near makin' us say oh revore, if not good-bye. Spill it, old bean!"

"Well, then," Coulson said doggedly, "we'll bury what's left of Jim, and collect what's left of Knight. That we'll take back to Mrs. Knight in Sindanao, and we will also take to her the turban of Sultan Giafar."

"Gee-whiz!" Josiah uttered incredulously. "Mean to say you turn your back on a chance like this? She's got no legal claim, man."

"He found it," Coulson said inexorably.

"Who knows he found it, but us?" Josiah urged.

"Josiah," Coulson said, "supposing it happened as you pictured last night, with the curtains drawn and your armchair in front of the fire, and the evening paper rustling—and the thought that you'd robbed a dead man to get it all!"

"But—look here, Coulson! Didn't we agree last night we were too honest?"

"We did. Why do you think Mole put me on to this search? Because he knew that I've never let a man down yet. Why

did I come after you the minute I'd signed up on it? Because I knew that in fourteen years of starving and slaving out here you've never done a thing you're ashamed of. Here's a fortune apiece, Josiah, I know, but—is it worth the price we'd have to pay for it?"

It was a full minute before Josiah moved or spoke. Then he stepped forward and held out his hand.

"Shake," he said. "You're a better man than me, Mister Coulson, and I guess we'll go on sticking it in the land of snuff and butter. But if it had been up to me, I'd have pinched the blessed thing."

"No, you wouldn't, when

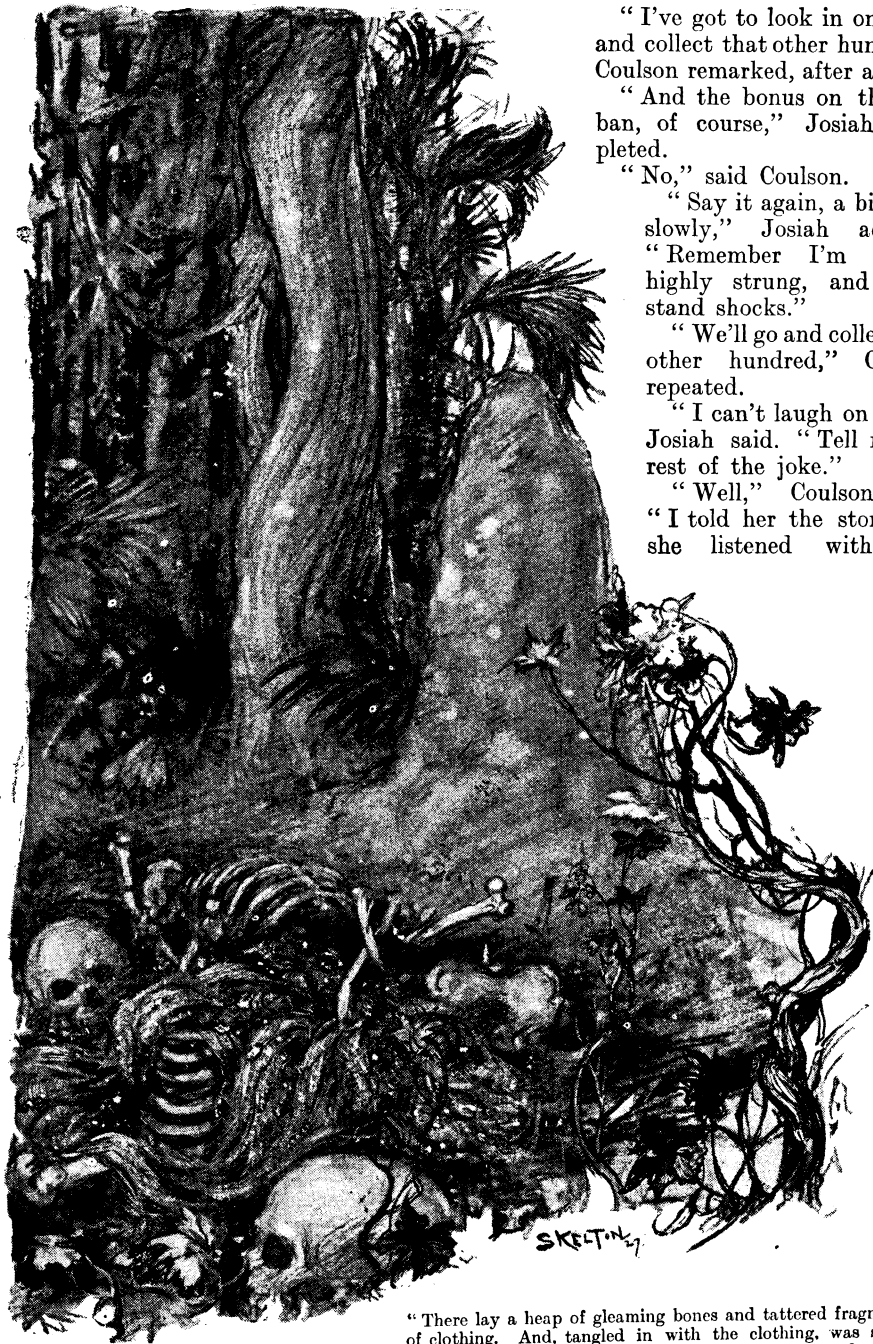


"Then he did find it!" Josiah almost whispered, in an awestruck way. "Giafar's turban—she was right—Mrs. Knight was right," Coulson said. "Yet—she wouldn't believe in it—"

you'd thought it out," Coulson answered.

"Heavens, but it makes me ache to think of it!" Josiah exclaimed with energy. "If the widow Knight was young and

beautiful, now, it wouldn't be so hard—but even a blind man couldn't call her that. Come on—let's get to work sorting out the bones."



"I've got to look in on Mole, and collect that other hundred," Coulson remarked, after awhile.

"And the bonus on the turban, of course," Josiah completed.

"No," said Coulson.

"Say it again, a bit more slowly," Josiah advised.

"Remember I'm a bit highly strung, and can't stand shocks."

"We'll go and collect that other hundred," Coulson repeated.

"I can't laugh on that," Josiah said. "Tell me the rest of the joke."

"Well," Coulson said, "I told her the story, and she listened without a

thing else—something that glimmered with a yellow sheen, in which sparkled points of glittering fire."

V.

COULSON, shutting the gate of Mrs. Knight's compound behind him carefully, nodded at Josiah, and fell into step beside him. Together they walked slowly down toward the main street.

word—didn't seem to care much about how Knight died. Then I put down the parcel, and she took it up and untied it, and unfolded Giafar's turban. Josiah, it's the most wonderful thing I've ever seen."

"What did she say?" Josiah asked.

"Nothing much," Coulson answered. "She drew the tissue through her fingers, and looked at the jewels in it, without a word. There was one diamond in it was worth a good five hundred—pounds, not dollars—and probably more."

"Didn't she say anything to that?" Josiah asked.

"Not a thing. When she'd run it all through her hands, and got an idea of what it was worth, she looked up at me. 'Mr. Coulson,' she said, 'I think, in view of the entire success of your search, it would be only fair to offer you an extra hundred dollars.'"

"Oh, fatted calves!" Josiah mourned aloud. "Fifty more apiece!"

"There she sat, with thousands of pounds in her hands, and offered an extra hundred dollars!" Coulson said reflectively.

"And you wiping away tears of gratitude," Josiah surmised.

"I said I was sure you'd feel about it as I did, and we'd both hate to impose on her generosity," Coulson concluded, and laughed a little. "I don't think she saw it—she just bowed, and I came away."

"Mean to say your sinful pride cost us fifty apiece?" Josiah inquired in an injured way.

"Exactly that," Coulson agreed.

They came to the main street, and turned down toward the office of Messrs. Knight and Mole.

"Better hurry up and collect our last hundred, before the widow looks for a flaw in the contract," Josiah advised. "Then we'll go up to Barney's and spoil my surname to the extent of two long ones, iced."

Coulson strode on, without answering.

"What you thinking about?" Josiah inquired.

"Wondering whether there's another Giafar's turban anywhere in the world," Coulson answered.

"There isn't," Josiah assured him. "Coulson, it's a pity we're so blamed honest, but it can't be helped."

Presently, as they walked, he began to whistle a music-hall ditty that had had a vogue fourteen years and more before this time, and while he whistled he looked out beyond the little harbour, beyond the shining reach of ocean—to the land of crackling newspapers, armchairs, firesides, and other things that such exiles as he see with an inward eye.

"No, it can't be helped," he repeated, and began to whistle the second verse.



THE MARSHLAND.

IT is lonely in the marshland, where the skies are often grey,
And the tang of salt is ever in the far-flung ocean spray,
But within its desolation, where the water-lilies float,
Is the green head of the mallard and the purple of its throat.

Oh, the music in the marshland when the wind blows through the sedge
And the sweetness of its singing, playing round the water's edge
In the reeds that shake with melody the tuneful warblers pipe,
And the air is all a-quiver with the drumming of the snipe.

It is lonely in the marshland, and to cheer the human soul
In its golden splendour flashing comes the welcome oriole.
And the dweller in this solitude forgets that life is harsh
In the piping and the singing and the drumming in the marsh.

PLUCK AND PEDIGREE

By EDWARD WOODWARD

"One sez, 'Moy 'oss a wunna joomp'; another sez, 'Young mon,
Will your 'oss joomp? fur if a will, Oi wish as you'd go hon.'
Sez Oi, 'Oi niver 'oss'd afore, bur louk oup, fur 'ere goes,'
And Smiler med a rood roight through and landed on his nooze."

Derbyshire Hunting Song: F. COTTON.

ILLUSTRATED BY GILBERT HOLIDAY

HERE, Grazebrook, Conny wants to ride astride in future. Give her your advice; I've done all I can."

Lieut.-Colonel Cyprian Todmarsh cast a half-humorous, half-irritated glance at the Hunt Secretary, Major Tom Grazebrook; and that gentleman, whose habit it was to dine once a week with the Master to discuss hunt business, looked in turn across the table at Constance Todmarsh, the sparkling twenty-four-year-old daughter of his host.

"Of course I do," cut in Conny, her red-gold hair looking like a halo round the vital pansy-eyed, red-lipped beauty of her face. "Habits, like skirts, are becoming as out-of-date as the crinoline. In impeding physical movement they hinder mental progress."

Colonel Todmarsh frowned. He was a firm upholder of the Victorian idea of womanly behaviour, and "this dashed sex-equality business" infuriated him; but Grazebrook, who'd married an ultra-smart townswoman with extravagant ideas, and who had long ago given up trying to control his own daughters, shrugged his shoulders in a resigned manner.

"Personally, I prefer to see a woman in a habit," he began, "but . . ."

"Being a man, you know nothing of its drawbacks," finished Conny with a challenging smile. "You two belong to the dear dead ages, which, thank heaven, are beyond recall so far as the young entry are concerned! Now, you smoke your cigars and talk taxation. I'm going to imbibe cigarette smoke and emancipation!"

She rose to her feet as she spoke and, with a provocative glance at her father, left the room.

"She's beyond me, Grazebrook," growled the Colonel, lighting his Corona Corona. "You'd think that after commanding a regiment of Dragoons I should be able to manage a motherless daughter, wouldn't you? I'm not! Conny is her own C.O., and as often as not mine too."

Grazebrook smiled behind his cigar.

"The only way is to let 'em have their heads and pray for a firm take-off and safe landing. The girls and the boys are a quaint, headlong crowd to-day." The Secretary spoke with a chuckle in his voice; but Colonel Todmarsh struck in intolerantly,

"Quaint! Quaint isn't the word! They are young rebels! Why, when Conny and I were up in town last month, she insisted, against my express wish, on going to some fancy-dress hop. . . . I looked in late, to bring her home, and I'm hanged if I could spot her at first. When I did, I saw she was wearing a domino and dancing with some young blighter dressed as the devil, whom she'd never seen before, and wouldn't know again if she met him! Didn't even know his name! . . . It's confoundedly dangerous, you know, Grazebrook! As things are, you want to know the fellows your girls know, pretty well. . . ."

"M'yes," agreed Grazebrook with a covert grin, for it was common knowledge that Colonel Todmarsh looked for a lord at least for his ewe-lamb. "By the way, I had a humorous chit from that cove who's taken Moat Lodge this morning. . . ."

"Didn't know anyone had taken it," broke in the Colonel. "Who is he?"

"A young fellow named William Wadley. He writes that he wants 'to join our Hunt,'"

answered Grazebrook with a wrinkled-eyed chuckle. "He enclosed a cheque for fifty guineas, 'by way of subscription and introduction,' and asks for a 'book of rules.' Free-handed youngster, I should think, and quite a humorist too."

"Wants mouthing and schooling, from the sound of him," growled the Colonel in his "creeping-barrage" voice. "All these waifs and strays do. I wish to heavens we could do without them."

"They bring much-needed money," murmured Grazebrook.

"And ruin the tone of the country," added the Master. "They ride over crops, jump on hounds or break down hedges, and generally have the same effect on the farmers as rennet does on milk. Still, I suppose I'll have to do the polite to the puppy."

"Just as well to stoop to conquer," said Grazebrook.

"Well, all I hope is that he keeps his place and doesn't

that he supplemented a none-too-adequate income by a bit of private coupling.

"I shouldn't be surprised," smiled Grazebrook. "Anyway, I'll drop him a note, and then look him up."

William Kimberley Wadley was a rugged-faced young man of thirty. A pair of intensely blue eyes, superimposed by large-lensed, horn-rimmed spectacles, gave him the appearance of an acute owl.



"Before Bill Wadley could speak, the Colonel laid his hand on Conny's arm and piloted her away."

come flirting with Conny. . . . I suppose you plan to sell him a horse or two. That's how you'll stoop to conquer. . . ." The Colonel chuckled as he glanced at the Secretary, of whom it was an open secret

There was the pallor of the townsman on his cheek; but the firm set of his lips and thrust of his chin saved his face from any suggestion of weakness.

He had taken up residence at Moat Lodge,

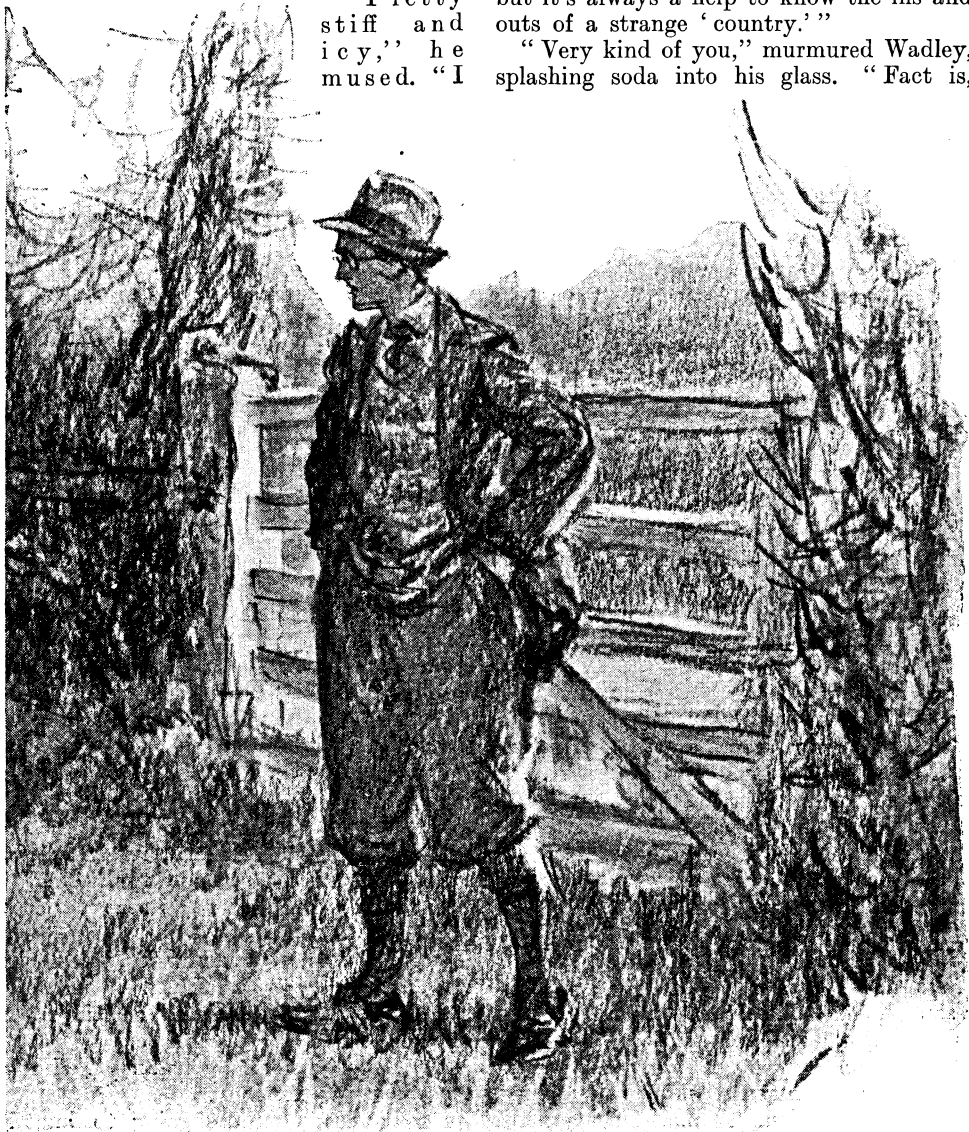
Fawton, and paid his sub. to the South Border Hunt for a very definite reason; and on receiving the secretary's very formal acknowledgment of his cheque, he smiled.

"Pretty stiff and icy," he mused. "I

the Lodge and gave Bill Wadley the hand of welcome.

"Thought I'd just look in," said Grazebrook, accepting a drink and gasper. "Don't know, of course, whether you want any tips; but it's always a help to know the ins and outs of a strange 'country.'"

"Very kind of you," murmured Wadley, splashing soda into his glass. "Fact is,



"'By James!' mused Bill Wadley, watching them go. 'Pretty stuffy old bird. I shouldn't wonder if he doesn't prove to be my biggest fence.'"

bet they consider me a poisonous interloper and plan to keep me in my place. . . . Wonder who will be my first curious caller?"

He had not to wait long, for that very afternoon Grazebrook, with a bit of horse-dealing in his eye, drove his car over to

I'm not much of a horseman, and less of a hunting man at the moment; but I expect I'll pick things up."

Speaking, he wondered what this dapper, dried-up chap, whose thin lips managed the cigarette as though it was a straw, would say if he knew the new subscriber

had been on a horse only twice in his life.

"Oh, yes," said Grazebrook. "Experience is the only way to learn; but the thing to be careful about is your selection of 'skins,' you know."

"Skins!" exclaimed Wadley. "But I thought they kept only the brush and mask of a fox."

"Ha-ha!" staccatoed Grazebrook. "That's a good 'un! But, joking apart, have you brought any horses down with you?"

"Oh, horses," said Wadley. "No. As a matter of fact, I was wondering where I'd better get one or two."

"Well," Grazebrook spoke thoughtfully, and strove to put indifference into his tone, "you could go to a dealer in Melton or Leicester; but if you're a bit green they might stick you, and sell you a showy washout which didn't know the country. . . . The better way is to buy privately, if you can, from other hunting men in the district."

"But I don't know any," objected Wadley.

"Oh," smiled Grazebrook, "I can soon put that right; I often help new-comers in that way. . . . As a matter of fact, I have a brace of 'safe-conveyances' in my stable which might suit you. They are a trifle on the eager side, but they are sturdy jumpers and know the country. . . . You'd better come and have a look at 'em."

"Thanks very much," said Bill Wadley. "I'll come over to-morrow, if I may. . . . Is it a stiff country round here?"

"In parts, yes," answered Grazebrook, "but medium on the whole. . . . We have some very fine horsemen and women amongst the followers, you know."

"So I've heard." Bill Wadley's eyes suddenly gleamed behind his spectacles. "Miss Todmarsh, the Master's daughter, is something of a wonder, isn't she?"

Grazebrook glanced slantways at Wadley. "Absolutely perfect," he answered.

"Horses and horsemanship are Conny Todmarsh's religion. A man isn't a man to her unless he can ride a straight line across any country."

"That's what I heard," murmured Wadley, omitting to mention that it was that information which had prompted him to rent Moat Lodge and pay his subscription to the South Border.

Grazebrook rose to his feet.

"Well, I must be hopping now," he said. "Shall I expect you to look over those two nags of mine to-morrow?"

"Please," said Wadley. "From what you say, I'll be needing a good horse."

II.

It was a week later, three days before the opening meet of the season, that Bill Wadley came suddenly upon Conny Todmarsh climbing over the gate between his paddock and the road. He had caused this to be padlocked, and the ignoring of his hint that he considered the field private-brought a smile to his lips.

Since coming to Fawton he had passed the Master's daughter once or twice on the road; and although on these occasions Wadley's heart had been in his eyes, Conny Todmarsh had sailed by with nothing more genial than faint and aloof interest. Now, however, she stopped and looked at him with a hint of hostility in her eyes.

"I say," she said. "If you are the new tenant of Moat Lodge, you've no business to lock this gate; there's an age-old right-of-way up this hedge, across the paddock to our place. . . ." She paused, and then added, "I suppose you *are* the tenant of the Lodge?"

"Yes," said Bill with a smile. "My name is Wadley, and I had this paddock-gate locked because I thought it might be left open otherwise and two horses I have just bought might stray out into the road."

Miss Todmarsh laughed, thereby showing a wonderful collection of pearls.

"If you refer to the two hunters I hear you've purchased from Major Grazebrook, you surely don't propose turning horses you are going to hunt this season out to grass?"

Seeing he had made a blunder, Bill Wadley strove to justify the remark.

"Only during week-ends," he said, feeling the colour come into his face.

For a second Miss Constance Todmarsh regarded him critically.

"I suppose you *are* going to hunt?" she asked, doubt in her voice.

"Rather," exclaimed Bill. "I didn't buy those two hunters to wear on my watch-chain, you know. Why do you ask?"

"Only because I hope devoutly you can ride," answered Conny. "The horses you have bought are no park-hacks or child's playthings, and the country round here is a good deal more tricky than a schooling ground. . . ."

"Do you know the animals, then?" inquired Bill, a little proudly.

"Yes," said Constance. "They are quite good in their way; a trifle inclined to get into their bridle when the pace gets warm, but they are sound fencers both of them. Nothing to grumble about at a hundred and fifty apiece; but if you take my tip you'll ride 'em both with a snaffle, they aren't nearly so likely to get away with you than if you gall 'em with a Pelham. . . ."

"Get away with me," repeated Bill. "D'you mean bolt?"

"Not exactly," smiled Conny. "But you might get into father's bad books by jumping on hounds, and sudden death down a chalk-pit is a good bit preferable to that. . . ."

"By Jove!" began Bill, and checked himself abruptly as Lieut.-Colonel Todmarsh strode up to the locked gate.

"Hop over, Dad!" laughed Conny. "I've just been telling Mr. Wadley about the right-of-way. . . ."

"Oh!" growled the Colonel, climbing over the gate and approaching his daughter. "Mr.—er—who did you say?"

"Let me introduce you properly," laughed Conny. "Mr. William Wadley of Moat Lodge—my father, Lieut.-Colonel Todmarsh, Master of the South Border Hounds, and pretty nearly all he surveys from this spot and his point of view!"

Under the Colonel's critical gaze Bill Wadley quailed for a space; and then, pulling himself together, he bowed and smiled.

"Awfully sorry about the gate, sir," he stammered.

"Don't mention it," snarled Colonel Todmarsh. "Nowadays one is becoming quite used to that sort of behaviour from new-comers. . . ." He turned to his daughter. "May I ask who introduced you to Mr.—er—Waddle?" he inquired.

"The gate," laughed Conny.

"Indeed!" The Colonel's attitude was Arctic. "Then I think we need not detain him any longer from fetching the key. . . . Good day to you, Mr. Waddle."

Before Bill Wadley could speak, the Colonel laid his hand on Conny's arm and piloted her away.

"By James!" mused Bill Wadley, watching them go. "Pretty stuffy old bird. I shouldn't wonder if he doesn't prove to be my biggest fence."

Striding towards Fawton Court, his

daughter at his side, Colonel Todmarsh grumbled into his big grey cavalry moustache.

"Confounded young puppy!" he fumed. "Comes here as large as life, and before he's been here ten minutes starts locking gates across rights-of-way! . . . And look here, Conny, my girl, you really must remember who you are, and keep these upstarts at arm's length. They ain't safe! I've been making a few inquiries about this fellow. . . ."

"And what have you found out?" cut in Constance with a smile.

"Nothing," snapped her father.

"Not even against him?"

"No. His past is too cleverly covered up for him to be straight, so don't you let me catch you speaking to him again."

Conny laughed outright.

"Don't be medieval, Dado," she exclaimed. "He can't eat me, and nowadays a girl speaks to whom she likes; besides, his voice and pronunciation are good, and his manners sound, although he is obviously no horseman and knows nothing of hunting. . . ."

"Well, that's to the good, at any rate," snapped the Colonel. "There's not much chance of you growing too friendly with a poon! But am I to understand you intend to disregard my wish and continue to know this fellow?"

"'Fraid so, Dad," answered Conny. "You see, I'm well over twenty-one, and all the other men round here are too nice-mannered to be amusing. This new-comer may be entertaining even if he can't ride. . . ." She paused, and then added thoughtfully, "The nicest man I ever met was the . . . the . . . 'devil' you found me dancing with in London last month!"

"What!" exclaimed Colonel Todmarsh in a horrified voice. "D'you mean you've given that cavorting mountebank a thought since?"

"Rather," confessed Conny. "I wish I knew his name! He was quite a tonic after the vapid commonplaces of the men around here!"

"Good heavens!" gasped her father. "Then I'll take this matter of Waddle, or whatever his dashed name is, into my own hands. . . . If you can't take care of yourself, I shall have to prevent you making a fool of yourself, myself!"

"That sounds a bit involved, Dad," smiled Conny. "But I know what you

mean. . . . Please don't make a mountain out of a molehill!"

"Molehill be dashed!" growled Colonel Todmarsh, and thereafter maintained a majestic silence until Fawton Court was reached.

Thus it came about that at breakfast next morning Mr. William Wadley received a red-hot note from Lieut.-Colonel Todmarsh:

"Lieut.-Colonel Todmarsh presents his compliments to Mr. William Wadley, and requests him kindly to refrain from counting Miss Constance Todmarsh amongst his acquaintances. Lieut.-Colonel Todmarsh holds definite views as to the desirability of a formal social introduction."

"The dashed old obstructionist!" murmured Bill after reading and re-reading this note. "I bet a fiver Conny doesn't know of this little love-letter. What with Grazebrook's thrusting nags, Conny's criticism, and the Master's thirst for my blood, my first day's hunting promises to be quite exciting!"

III.

BILL WADLEY was no coward. His presence at Moat Lodge, Fawton, his membership of the South Border Hunt, and his ownership of a brace of thrusting hunters proved that; but all the same, when, on the morning of the opening meet of the season, he mounted a big bay—Maneater, Grazebrook had called him, with a twinkle in his eye—and after receiving one or two words of advice from Mortimer, the groom Grazebrook had also provided him with, rode off to Cross Trees, he felt anything but happy.

"I'm a bit of a blessed fathead," he told himself, trying convulsively to check Maneater from jumping over his own shadow. "If I succeed in anything to-day it will be in making a fool of myself, and then breaking my neck! I ought to have stayed in Town!"

But having reached this point, thoughts of Conny Todmarsh took hold of him, and as, reaching the main road, he saw the stream of hunt-going folks, he knew he was ready to risk anything to gain her good opinion.

Riding along with that motley procession of fox-hunters; farmers on raw-boned "bits of blood"; horse-dealers on showy, roman-nosed "squibs"; immaculate pink-coated Members on priceless hunters, in company with fresh-coloured, white-stocked, black-

hatted, black-habited women, Bill Wadley in his new "ratcatcher" felt decidedly out of it. But it was nothing to his feelings when at length Cross Trees was reached, and in the midst of the cream of the county, he glimpsed Lieut.-Colonel Cyprian Todmarsh, Conny, huntsmen and whippers-in, and the white, black and tan of the pack.

"I suppose," mused Bill, watching the other members laughing and chatting, "I ought to make a noise like a speck of dust and get blown away; but I'm going to stick and learn this fox-hunting business or die. My goodness, Conny looks a picture!"

Out of the corner of her eyes Conny had spotted him too, and a faint smile came to her lips.

"He doesn't look bad," she mused, "but I don't believe he can ride. My stars, he must have pluck, and I hope he doesn't come a really sticky one!"

For a time she continued to watch the new tenant of Moat Lodge, and when at length hounds moved off to the covert, she contrived to slip away unnoticed from her father's side and edge up close to Bill.

"Morning, Mr. Wadley," she greeted him. "How's Maneater carrying you?"

Bill Wadley's heart jumped.

"Oh, splendidly, thank you," he answered, doing business with fingers and hat-brim.

"Good," smiled Conny. "Well, if you want to get away with 'em you'd better make for that bottom corner there. 'Charles' is pretty sure to break in that direction with the wind where it is."

Without waiting for any reply, she touched her big roan with her heel and cantered off in the direction indicated, and willy-nilly—Maneater knowing the country like a human fox-hunter—Bill had to follow. Arrived at that bottom corner, Bill Wadley managed to pull the bay to a standstill.

"Heavens!" he thought, looking round him, at the "cut-and-laid" two hundred yards away, at the "bullfinch" across the next field. "This is the very dickens! Here am I hemmed in by blood-curdling fences, and I've never put a horse at a jump in my life! What the blazes did I come for? What the deuce will Conny think of me when she sees me ride at the first obstacle?"

From the covert came the rustle of fallen leaves and the occasional snap of a dead branch as hounds and huntsmen moved about. To Bill the whole air seemed alive with expectancy; and then suddenly one

of the hounds gave tongue, in an instant the whole pack took up the note, the huntsman's horn twanged out, and as "Gone away! Gone away!" came to Bill's ears, Maneater reached his head forward to get a greater length of rein and ripped away after the already scurrying followers.

To Bill Wadley that "Gone away!" was the ringing up of the curtain on the greatest act in his life.

Ahead he saw Conny Todmarsh "sit down" to that "cut-and-laid," saw Grazebrook and half a dozen others flip over it like swallows, and, utterly powerless to stop Maneater, he followed. He felt the big bay pause twenty yards short of the fence, felt the big muscles tense as that twenty yards was covered, and then the upward heave, a second's flight through space, and—

"By Jove! I'm over!" gasped Bill. "Heavens! I've taken my first fence, and there's nothing in it. . . . One just sits still."

But here the novice, knowing a little, ignored the much which still remained to be learned; and with a sudden inflow of self-confidence, he touched Maneater with his heel, felt himself sway in the saddle as the bay swept forward under the urge, and the next instant knew he'd been a fool.

Maneater, wise in the ways of men as he was wise in the ways of hounds, was aware he had a novice aboard, and had been prepared to take things easily; but now with the thump of that heel in his ribs, with the soft springy turf beneath his hoofs, he decided to have a run himself, and stretching out his neck to gain a "job-free" length of rein, he sprang into steeplechasing speed and made for the "bullfinch," three hundred yards ahead, like a streak of bay lightning.

Dimly, with the wind blurring his sight, and nipping the breath as it left his nostrils, Bill was carried forward like a fly on a swallow. He was powerless and helpless; all he could do was to cling desperately to saddle and reins, expecting every second to lose his balance and be pitched on to the backward-swimming turf.

Fifty yards from the "bullfinch" he swept past Conny Todmarsh, who, expecting a long point, was nursing her four-year-old mare; fled past Tom Grazebrook, who, being a family man, was nursing his own neck; swept past the Master, who, being on the sloping side of sixty, was nursing himself.

"Jupiter!" thought Grazebrook. "He's got an awkward seat, but he's a thruster!"

"Hang that feller!" growled the Master.

"I knew he was one of the loose-rein and bloody-spur brigade! If he jumps on my hounds I'll horsewhip him!"

And, "Oh, Heavens!" thought Conny, watching Bill's swaying progress. "The poor dear has lost control! He's for an unholy toss!"

Instinctively, seeing Bill Wadley's danger, she sent her mare forward. "I'll be near at hand when it does happen!" she thought. "A man with his pluck deserves a bit of help when he takes what's coming to him!"

But Bill was unconscious of these comments. All he knew was that he was being carried through space at what seemed to him a hundred miles an hour; that before him, getting nearer and bigger every second, was one of the biggest, tallest hedges he'd ever seen.

"This is the end!" he decided. "This is what love of a girl has done for me!"

Nearer and nearer came that terrible hedge. Bill shut his eyes, clenched his teeth, and gripped with his knees for all he was worth.

Up! Up! Up! Bill for one second thought the bay had taken to wings. Then, crash! A thousand brambles and whipping thorn-leaders whipped and wrenched at his face, arms and hands. He felt himself torn and pulled sideways, the saddle seemed a live thing between his knees, trying to hump him off. . . .

Then, wonder of wonders, he felt the bay land steadily on the far side, knew with a sudden lift of his heart that he had cleared his second fence, and this time no "cut-and-laid," but a man's jump.

Behind, he heard a girl's voice call a breathless:

"Well jumped! Take a pull now, there's water in front!"

Hearing that voice, recognising it as Conny Todmarsh's, a new delight filled Bill's soul. "Heavens! He was making good! He'd actually won a word of praise from her for his horsemanship!"

Joy swept caution from him. He forgot the warning— Had he remembered it, it would have made little difference, for he was still quite unable to control Maneater, who, warmed to the job, was having the time of his life—forgot everything but the joy of accomplishment, the ecstatic delight of having earned those two words: "Well jumped!" from Conny Todmarsh.

A smooth green death-trap of marshy, boggy land lay before him. Hounds, two

low-lying meadows in front, were running mute; and now, risking everything, Bill forged ahead; recklessly he rapped over a post and rails, a thorn-crowned bank and a stiff guard-railed oxer. He still swayed and hunched at take-off and landing, but balance was coming to him; and then

It was ten minutes later that Bill Wadley opened his eyes and shivered to the dank, clinging embrace of sodden clothes. His head ached like nothing on earth; his limbs seemed not to belong to him. He groaned. Then he opened his eyes, and saw Conny Todmarsh kneeling by his side



"Instinctively, seeing Bill Wadley's danger, she sent her mare forward. 'I'll be near at hand when it does happen!' she thought. 'A man with his pluck deserves a bit of help when he takes what's coming to him!'"

suddenly, without warning, he came to the water against which Conny had cautioned him.

Glimpsing its muddy width, Bill tried to check, to choose a narrow portion of the stream; but he might as well have tried to hinder a runaway traction engine. In the effort he bore hard on the off-side rein, lost the grip of his saddle; and even as, wrenching his head forward, Maneater fled for the water, Bill knew his balance was gone.

With his heart in his mouth, Bill felt the bay shoot the near bank from under his feet, saw a reeling far-bank up-tilted in the sky, felt his foot slip from near-side stirrup, jabbed hard at the reins as he turned over sickeningly, saw, in that frenzied moment, the bay toss his head; and then, Splash!

A perfect sea of water seemed to engulf Bill as horse and man fell mid-stream. He felt the air drowned out of his nose and mouth, felt the bay plunging against him, a stunning blow on the head, and then darkness—a blank!

and bending over him with a brandy-flask in her hand.

"Feeling nippier, John Gilpin?" she asked. "I'm mounting guard over you whilst Tom Grazebrook has gone to look for a conveyance of some sort to take you home. . . ."

Bill blinked for a second. Utter disappointment filled his soul. After all, then, he'd made an ass of himself. Conny had called him John Gilpin!

"I came a bit of a purler, didn't I!" he said, smiling through the agony of his head.

"Well, you've been asking for it for the last twenty minutes," laughed Conny. "What in the name of goodness possessed you to hunt when you don't even know how to ride at a fence?"

A slow smile creased Bill's lips. Now he

had lost, he might just as well make a clean breast of it.

"You," he said.

"Me!" Conny's eyes widened, and there was astonishment in her voice.

"Yes," answered Bill. "Ever since I danced with you at that fancy-dress hop..."

hunt. . . . You see, I write plays for a living, and I've not had much time for hunting or the country. . . ."

A sudden flush had come to Conny's cheeks.

"D'you mean to say you risked your neck just in order to know me. . . Why did



"Nearer and nearer came that terrible hedge. Bill shut his eyes, clenched his teeth, and gripped with his knees for all he was worth. Up! Up! Up! Bill for one second thought the bay had taken to wings."

"Then you are the 'devil'!" exclaimed Conny.

"That's right," said Bill. "Ever since that evening I've planned to know you. . . . I found out who you were, was told you cared only for hunting men, and men who rode, so I jolly well decided to ride and

you want to know me so desperately?"

"Well," grinned Bill Wadley, "I never was one for beating about the bush. . . . Frankly, because I love you, have loved you ever since the evening of that dance. . . ." He stopped abruptly, watching a gleaming smile in Conny's eyes. . . . "Er . . .

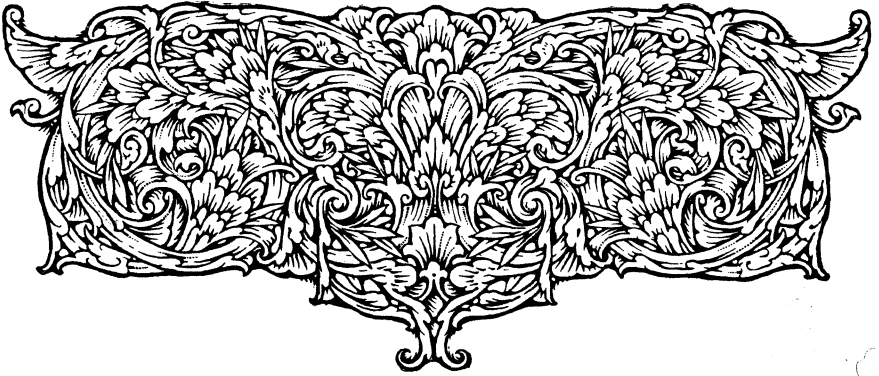
Have I any chance? . . . Can you think twice of a man who's made such an exhibition of himself as I have?"

"I shouldn't be surprised," answered Conny, bending very low over his face. "Father plans for me to marry nobody less than a lord; but it's my show, and I'll be content with a hero!"

The next second Bill Wadley felt Conny's

lips on his, and when Tom Grazebrook returned, having found a car to take Bill home, he wondered why it was the patient was so dashed cheerful.

Lieut.-Colonel Cyprian Todmarsh was present at the wedding, for the simple reason that he admired pluck as much as, if not more than, pedigree.



THE MONKEY-PUZZLE TREE.

THE monkey-puzzle tree
Has a hundred hands
She stretches out to me
Where alone she stands,

A sentinel at night
By the window wide,
Peeping, keeping me in sight
From the lawn outside.

The wind that will not cease
From his sullen roar
Makes an enemy of peace
At the farmhouse door;

But the monkey-puzzle tree,
Like a mother, wakes
Crooning fondly over me,
And his harsh breath slakes.

She will soften it with charms
Into songs for me,
Though he break the hundred arms
Of the monkey-puzzle tree.

LEOPOLD SPERO.

HOW SALLY TOLD : THE TRUTH :

By EUSTACE AINSWORTH

◉ ◉ ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY LLOYD ◉ ◉

ON the northern side of a steep hillock a small window looked up the Lake, a window without anything that could properly be called a house; and inside the dug-out a man walked from one large incubator to another examining the thermometers and adjusting the oil-lamps as required. At the end of the earth bench he stopped before a large calendar which was tacked on to the timber framing, and muttered, "Twenty-first of March, by Jove! The Equinox again."

Then he glanced out of the tiny window at the sky, wondering whether the date was to justify its bad reputation, and saw a girl wandering round the back of his house. She wore a woollen cap pulled over her ears, for the spring was a fortnight or more late, a short trench-coat strapped round her waist, and laced-up boots to the knee. He had time to notice, too, that she actually wore skirts instead of one of the various types of bifurcated garments affected by most young ladies "on the land," before she caught sight of his face and came across the intervening ground.

"Good afternoon," she said as he opened the narrow door. "You don't happen to want any help, do you? My name's Dent."

"I shall do in a week's time," he replied carefully, "but I should probably get a man."

"I understand incubators and brooders," she said, "and I can feather and dress cockerels for market. I got a County Council Certificate at home, and before my mother died we always had a hundred or more birds and two cows."

"How long have you been out here?" he asked.

"About five months. I'm lodging with Mrs. Platt down by the Creek, and want work. If you don't mind me saying so,

there isn't enough ventilation in this place." And she pulled off her woollen cap and puffed out a long breath.

The man laughed. Then he stopped laughing and looked at Miss Dent more carefully. She was very good-looking. It would certainly brighten things up; and they were dull enough.

"I work a twelve hours' day," he said, watching her face.

"I'll work all the hours you want."

"I'll try you," said Kay. "Be here at six in the morning; I'll give you breakfast, but you must bring your own lunch."

"You're very good," she said gratefully. "To tell the truth, I'm tired of wandering and want to settle down for a while."

She went off with a nod, and Kay stood watching her go. He noticed that she walked well and quickly and did not look back. Then he went round the incubators again, and shut up for the night.

At the end of a week they understood and respected each other. Kay learned that her name was Sally, and realised that she must have come from good stock; while Sally Dent appreciated Kay's straightforwardness, and repaid it by giving her very best to the hatching chickens and the five hundred last year's birds. More than that, she soon insisted on cooking the joint breakfast of bacon and coffee, and even did a certain amount of straightening-up in the kitchen every evening before she left.

"Well, I can't help it," she replied when Kay protested. "I suppose I'm built that way. Some day when things slacken a bit we'll clean the house from roof to ground."

But of one thing Sally was careful: she never asked questions about Kay's past. Men of thirty-five who live alone in the outlying parts of the world—men of culture, that is, like Tom Kay—have generally lived

in more luxurious surroundings at one time of their life; and they tell you as much of their past, quite willingly, as they care to remember or wish you to know.

Inevitably they grew familiar; chaffed and contradicted each other; even quarrelled over trifles; till Tom Kay, one lovely afternoon in May, asked her a question that had been on his tongue some time.

"What are you going to do in the winter, Sally?"

"Going home, Mr. Kay."

"Is Dorset so much nicer than B.C.?" he fished.

"I've a home there," she said, "and lots of friends."

"I might be going home myself."

"You couldn't; who'd look after this place?"

"I'd sell it."

"Oh no!" she exclaimed, "not after all the work you've done! Why, if you're not going on with the farm there's no interest in all that we do."

"All the same, I might," he said. "It will be precious dull without you."

"Yes, it must be nice to have me about," she laughed, "and I don't suppose I'll ever forget this place."

"Sally——" he began.

"You know you've slipped into using my Christian name, Mr. Kay. I don't mind it when you're shouting at me to clean a brooder, or go and feed the hens, but when we're off duty I'd rather you didn't, if you don't mind."

"Sorry," he said. "I'll try and call you 'Miss Dent'; but I'll mean 'Sally' all the time."

"You can mean what you like," she replied. "By the way, could you lend me something to read?"

"I've only some magazines," said Kay.

"Why, you've heaps of books, rows of them, in the front room near the door."

"Oh—those," he said uncomfortably; "you wouldn't care about any of them."

"But I should. I've seen them through the window."

"Well, to tell the truth," he replied, "I make a practice of never lending books."

Sally was bewildered. Anything less like the Tom Kay with whom she had worked for two months could not be imagined. Then she remembered that the only time she had tried to go into his room where the books were, she had found the door locked. But Sally persisted—partly because she really wanted a book, but more because she

felt that there was something wrong; that either she had misjudged Kay or Kay was now misjudging her. So she looked into his troubled face and said: "There's one book that I want particularly; it's *Oliver Twist*; lend it me, Mr. Kay."

"Wait here," he said after a pause. "I'll see what I can do."

Sally waited.

"Here it is," he said, handing her the book. "Keep it as long as you like."

Sally opened it at once. "The fly-leaf's torn out," she remarked. "Why did you do that? Ten minutes since you spoke as though you trusted me; now you don't."

"Trusting people isn't always a kindness," he replied; "sometimes it means saddling them with a responsibility that they certainly don't want. I trust you to do everything that's right and honourable, but, as you notice, I don't trust you with my name—yet."

"Then you're not Tom Kay?" she asked quietly.

Of course it showed Sally's common sense, her fending this good-looking fellow off till she knew more about him; and yet she seemed to take no great pride in the act.

After that little incident the friendship took a change. She was still "Sally" in working hours, and still laboured and strove to please him in every way; but self-consciousness hampered them both.

Came June, and blazing heat that put everyone into the skimpiest washing-clothes, open-throated so that a mahogany triangle was reflected from the mirror as one washed; and came also the cockerel round-up, when all the male birds of the year's hatch were penned, picked out, killed, and shipped up to the main line. Now there was no twelve-hour day; Sally and her mysterious friend worked all hours, and still left work undone.

"I'll have to get some more help," Kay announced desperately one afternoon; "you simply mustn't go on like this. It's too hot, and the hours are too long."

"Don't!" she pleaded. "There's nothing else to do but work, and I always feel that this is the time I shall look back upon with pleasure all my life. Don't you sometimes feel that every day of solid, dog-tired, sweating work wipes out some rotten thing that you've done, or thought of doing, in the past?"

"How splendid you are!"

"To tell the truth," she said candidly, "I simply love working for you."

"Although I don't trust you, Miss Dent?"

"Well, for that matter," she smiled, "how d'you know I trust you?"

"You trust me with your name, at any rate," he reminded her.

"There's someone coming in from the road."

"Someone" consisted of a man and woman, well-turned-out people, with a big hired car at the gate.

"That's the result of your notice-board," Sally chaffed. "You've attracted some tourists at least!" Then as Kay did not reply, she turned her head in time to see him making a bolt for the house.

"I beg your pardon," the visitor said, raising his hat, "but as I passed here yesterday I thought I recognised an old friend."

"In me?" Sally quizzed.

"No, it was a man," while his companion eyed Sally from head to foot; "but from the glimpse I got I wasn't sure. So I motored out again to-day, and unless I'm very much mistaken the gentleman who was sitting beside you just now is the man that I thought he was."

"The gentleman who was sitting beside me just now," she countered, "is obviously the man that he was yesterday. D'you want to see round the farm?"

"No, I hate farms. But I believe I've seen an old friend who disappeared from England about eight months ago; his name is Timothy Knight."

The strange woman's eyes opened because she happened to be watching Sally's face; and Sally's face was expressing horror and disbelief, backed by a foreshadowing of humour as though, with the least encouragement, she would laugh outright.

"I see," she said, after collecting her wits. "Well, you've made a mistake. The gentleman who owns this place, and who pays my wages, and who was sitting here just now, is Mr. Tom Kay; been here for ages—regular old-timer, so to speak."

"Splendid!" the visitor replied admiringly. "Wherever Tim goes he makes firm and steadfast friends. If I'd been in your place I'd have lied every bit as handily. Give him my card," putting it in Sally's hand, "and just look at it yourself. All you've got to do is to remind me of this encounter and, just for Tim's sake, you'll see me careering up the welkin, lance in rest!"

Then Sally did laugh. "I'm glad to meet one of Mr. Kay's friends," she said, with an emphasis on the name, "and I can quite believe that wherever he goes he makes more."

Then the lady took a hand. "Amidst all this mystery," she said with a smile, "I can't stand silent; no woman could. My husband and I are staying at the Incola Hotel; if you and—er—Mr. Kay would dine with us some evening——"

"That's very kind of you, Mrs. Davidson," said Sally, with a glance at the card; "but in the first place Mr. Kay and I are not a pair—I'm his 'hired help'; I come here at daylight, at this season, and go away at dusk; Mr. Kay pays me thirty cents an hour; and secondly, as you will gather from what I've said, social engagements at this time of the year are out of the question on a chicken farm."

"Mr. Kay has a very nice house," the lady said, in an obvious search for information.

"So I should judge," replied Sally sweetly. "I've never been farther than the kitchen myself."

"Well, thank you very much," said Davidson, realising that the women were 'engaging,' as soldiers say. "Perhaps you'll be good enough to give Tim that card, and tell him, with my compliments, not to be an ass. Come on, my dear, let's get back to the car."

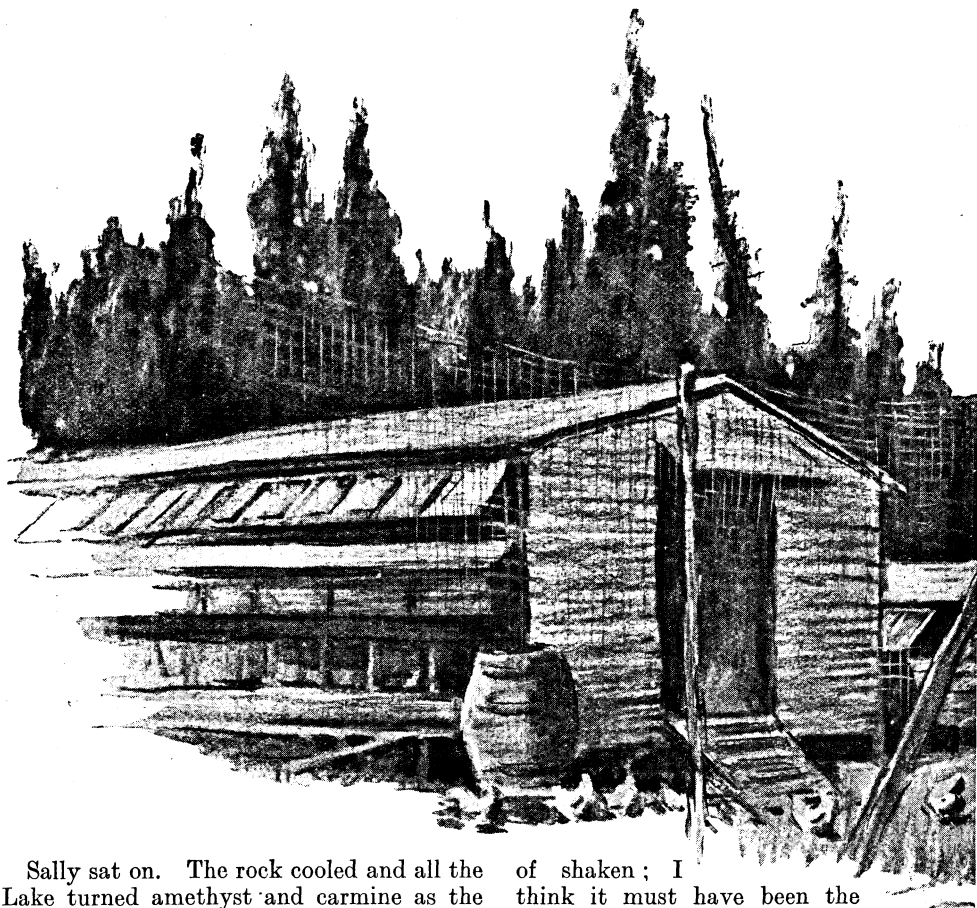
Sally watched them go. Then she walked violently to the very top of a hill half a mile away and sat down on a hot rock. Of all the astounding, unaccountable impossibilities!

She saw Tom Kay come out of the house and look round, saw his every movement in that glass-clear air; watched him search for her; even imagined that she heard him call.

What on earth was she to do?

He had given her up, probably imagining that she had gone off with the visitors, who might be friends of hers for all that he knew; and now a white cloud of wings flashed in the sun as hundreds of Leghorn pullets and chickens heard the click of a certain latch that meant their evening feed. Kay was handling them alone. Well, it couldn't be helped.

Tim Knight, six thousand miles from Charing Cross! It all fitted in so well, too. Kay had admitted that he left England "last October" and had bought the farm as a going concern at Christmas. But what a position she was in!



Sally sat on. The rock cooled and all the Lake turned amethyst and carmine as the sun dropped behind the hills. Of all the impossible, ridiculous situations—Sally got up, and the stiffness of her knees reminded her of the length of time she had spent in the contemplation of this new and whimsical fact. Then, as it was growing dusk and Kay would not be able to see her, she bore away to the left and passed the house at a little distance on her way home.

Next day she gave Kay the card. "They're at the hotel," she said casually, "and would like you to dine with them some night."

Tom Kay stared at the black and white thing in his hand. "But what did they say?" he asked, meaning evidently, "Do you know who I am?"

"Nothing much," Sally replied. "I told them this was Mr. Kay's farm, and they said, would Mr. Kay come to dinner? I said I hadn't the least idea. I told them you were very busy and all that sort of thing, of course, but I didn't refuse or accept on your behalf. I'm sorry I couldn't help you to feed last night, but I was sort

of shaken; I think it must have been the sun."

"I noticed your absence," he said dryly. "Are you going to dine with the Davidsons?" she asked.

"No. By the way, who was the woman? Was that Davidson's wife?"

"She implied that she was," Sally answered; "but then anyone would be glad to do that, I suppose."

"What on earth d'you mean?"

"Well, he's a real man among men, isn't he? I thought he was awfully nice!"

"Who? Davidson?" Kay rubbed his chin while gazing at Sally's too innocent face. "I don't know. I suppose I've met him somewhere. Tell me what he said. I wish you'd found out whether that was really his wife."

"You seem very interested in the lady. Why didn't you stay and find out for yourself?"

"Davidson didn't say anything extraordinary, I suppose? Anything, I mean, that came to you as a surprise?"

"Well, now that you mention it, he did:

he said that if ever I was in distress he would come charging up the welkin, lance in rest! I thought that was rather an odd thing to say, considering that we'd only just met. But perhaps that wasn't his wife after all, as you suggest."

This air of teasing was something new, and Kay fell back on to safer ground.

"Well, if you're sure you won't get sunstroke again and leave me in the lurch,

tions of blame and excuse—Kay asking "why the deuce she couldn't look what she was doing," and Sally retiring in a pet until his ostentatious disregard of her absence drew her back to help—now their relationship had come under further restraint. Sally admitted



"'Here it is,' he said, handing her the book. Sally opened it at once."

we'd better dip the perches in Number Three house; there's red mite there, and this time of year it spreads like the plague."

Said Sally to herself: "All right, Mr. Tim, the longer you keep it up the more time I have to think." But whereas they generally worked together with exclama-

that this was her fault; she would be holding one end of a wooden perch and watching Kay's handsome face with a kind of awe, when he would look up suddenly and Sally would lose her nerve. "Six thousand miles from Charing Cross," she kept saying to herself, and there was Tim Knight at the

other end of a wooden stick soaked in creosote; while she stood like a dummy, and Kay asked whether she was still feeling the effect of the sun. It was all right for Kay; Kay did not know.

All this was in July. The last of the squawking and indignant cockerels had been dispatched; the chickens were out on range, hawks and weasels hunting them by day, owls and skunks by night; so that Sally and Kay divided the twenty-four hours into two shifts. At first Kay was for taking the night-work himself, but Sally's common-sense arguments changed things round. Whoever took the day-shift had all the feeding and cleaning to do, whereas night-work was simply a matter of patrol. With penned-up birds, of course, all was safe, but there was so much to be gained by complete freedom in the first six months that it was worth while having to take precautions for a short time, especially as that season was not one of great pressure from other directions.

So it came about that Sally and Kay were separated for a month, meeting only at dawn and dusk for a formal greeting and report; and so naturally it came about also that Kay and Sally missed each other rather badly, and that the latter was given ample opportunity to shape her new course. But for these facts the night-shift would not have merited mention any more than the hundred other duties that they shared; as it was, like all separations, it drew them together more quickly than any amount of companionship could have done. Kay would fill and trim Sally's lamp during his tour of duty, and later watch that lamp swing like a church bell as Sally moved from one spot to another in the dark. At first he watched it for about ten minutes; then for half an hour; till finally he summoned all his determination and absolutely refused to look out of his window at all.

And Sally? Well, Sally of course bumped the hurricane lamp against the calf of her leg and saw nothing but the circle of lighted ground and ghostly trees that followed her about. She could not avoid seeing Kay's house because, however dark, it stood up like a couple of haystacks against the sky, but she thought of him asleep in there with a good deal of relief. At dawn she made a thorough inspection for corpses, the mark of the skunk who believes in mass-destruction; or for the wing-stocks, gizzard and head, which the horned owl leaves as his P.P.C.; but such was the rightness of her

instinct in foreseeing the movements of hidden creatures, that not once during the month had she to report a casualty when Kay appeared.

Thus August passed, September entering like a candid friend who warns one of coming coolness; welcome in some ways, at any rate inevitable. Now the young birds were sorted out and penned ready for the early layers, the old birds reduced in number to those with special records, for breeding from next year, and the night-patrol no longer required.

"Let's go and clean out all the incubators," Sally suggested one day. "I suppose it's getting near the end of my time here, and I'd like to think that I'd left everything ready for next spring."

"All right," he said hopelessly, "I suppose it will have to be done."

"That's not the spirit!" she cried, seizing his hand and pulling him towards the dug-out where they had first met. "For goodness' sake cheer up!"

"I can't," he said as he closed the door and looked across the gloomy chamber.

"Well, of course if you feel like that I can't help you." And Sally wandered away to stand before the calendar nailed up at the far end of the bench.

"It's just a fortnight to the twenty-first," she said, as though speaking to herself.

Kay had followed, and saw her put a finger on the date.

"Yes," he said, "a most interesting day."

"The Equinox, of course," she agreed; "the date of storms and shipwrecks. Does the twenty-first mean anything particular to you, Mr. Kay?"

"Yes," he replied, "it does. I want to tell you about it, Sally. Sit down."

Sally sat on the clay bench, leaning back against the wall with her hands clasped behind her head. She had stopped thinking now, as an actress stops recalling her lines; the curtain was going up.

"I suppose, unless I can stop you in the only possible way," he began, "you'll be going away at the end of the month; but before you go I want to tell you something about myself."

Sally did not move or wink an eye.

"I want to do this for two reasons. One is that up till a short time since we were such excellent pals, and I don't want you to go away perhaps thinking wrong of me when there is no cause."

He more than expected her to deny the possibility of such a thing, but Sally gazed silently at the planked roof. She was watching her opening and would not come on to the stage till it came.

"The other reason," he went on, "I'll tell you later, though you probably know it already. Now about myself. My name, as you know quite well, is not Tom Kay; it's Tim Knight. I'm a nephew of the late Sir Timothy Knight of Knightsford. A year ago I was poultry-farming in Devonshire with my younger brother, when my Uncle Tim died. He died on the twenty-first of September and left a will as dictatorial and perverse as the kind-hearted old fellow had been all his life. This will, after detailing various charitable bequests, left the balance of his estate—and it was a very large sum—to a niece of his whom I have never seen; but he left it to her only on the outrageous condition that she married me within twelve months of the date of his death; failing which his fortune was to go to the King's Hospital Fund.

"Well, that put me into a dreadful position. If I sought out my distant and unknown cousin—and I believe she's a very nice girl—the situation would not only have been most embarrassing but, to my mind, might have led to great unhappiness. Perhaps I take a more serious view of marriage than some people, but to me it has always seemed so risky an experiment that it should only be made under the best and safest conditions; I'm thinking of it from the point of view of both husband and wife. To my mind there is only one safe foundation to raise so critical a building upon, and that is a feeling that, quite apart from any other consideration, you will never be happy without that particular woman, or man, for your very own.

"Now I didn't and couldn't feel that about Sheila Derwent, and she of course couldn't have felt that about me; and yet if we met I saw the distinct possibility that that feeling would be counterfeited, unintentionally no doubt; that we should both of us come to believe that it was actually there, when really it would not and could not be. Even, I said to myself, if one of us fell in love with the other, even if we both fell in love with each other, there would always be that skeleton in the cupboard to be brought out in our bad moments: had the other really cared, or was it a sham?"

"So you packed up and ran away for

a year," Sally prompted. "I may say that I quite understand and appreciate your feelings."

"Thank you," he replied; "but it is at least open to argument that I did a mean and cowardly thing. Sheila Derwent is not at all well off."

"Are you?" she asked, without looking at him.

"No."

"Then if you deprived her of a fortune, you at any rate shared in the loss yourself."

"Yes."

"And the year is finished next week, Mr. Kay? Then you'll feel safe and can go back home if you wish; Sheila won't be able to trouble you any more. What a funny thing it would be if you met her in England, and fell in love, and married—too late! That would make quite a good plot for a tale."

"I may go home or not. I'm not sure. As to my falling in love with Sheila if I met her, that brings me to my second reason for inflicting on you this family affair."

"Yes?" she asked quietly.

"I couldn't ever fall in love with Sheila or anyone else because I'm so deeply and truly in love with you."

"Are you sure?" she asked without moving. "And is this your caution in marriage, that you want a girl for wife about whom you really know nothing at all? Are those your sure foundations—Tim Knight?"

"The surest and safest of all," he cried, drawing her towards him. "Sally! Say something! Tell me that you love me!"

"I could do that truthfully, Tim"—turning her face away from his—"but before we go any further it must be on the square."

"What d'you mean?"

"I've heard your side of the question; you've got to hear mine."

"But I only want three words, Sally; I don't want explanations; no one could possibly 'explain' you. When people love they love the other persons, not their name or their history—"

"Let me go, Tim!"

"All right," he said. "But it doesn't matter what you're going to say; you're the only girl in all the world to me!"

"You think my real name is of no account?"

"No account at all; you're Sally to me and will never be anything else."

"You couldn't bring yourself to call me Sheila, I suppose?"

Tim stared in silence.

"If you knew, for instance, that your lawyers happened also to be mine, and happened to have a certain amount of common sense; that after a month's inquiring about you and yours I decided

"Yes, but which? Whom did you actually see?"

"Oh—Mr. Medway, I think."

"And he told you, did he? I'm rather surprised."

Something in his tone knocked a prop out of Sally's confidence, and it sank.

"There's another thing that I don't



"She stood like a dummy, and Kay asked whether she was still feeling the effect of the sun."

to find you, and that I got your address from them? Should I still be the only girl in the world?"

Tim sprang up and walked to the little window from which Sally had first caught his eye.

"Whom did you say you got my address from?" he asked over his shoulder.

"The lawyers, of course."

Now he turned round and faced her.

understand. When Davidson came here with his wife and told you who I was, a few weeks ago, why did you promptly run away if you'd known it all the time? And why have you been so different ever since? From that day to this you've seemed to hold me at a distance, as though I was unclean!"

"It was the sun——" she began.

"It was fiddle-de-dee. I saw you sitting

on a rock away up there; your white hat could be seen for miles."

"I never said that Davidson did tell me who you were!"

"No, but he wrote and warned me next day, in case he might have done something foolish by mistake. I didn't think it mattered particularly at the time, but if you say that you knew who I was all the time, why on earth did you run away when he told you? It's almost as mysterious as the lawyer fellow giving you my address; because he never knew it and doesn't know it now!"

"But surely you must have told someone!" she protested weakly.

"I didn't, Sally, or Sheila, or whoever the devil you are. I never told a soul. I handed everything over to my brother, with a power of attorney for eighteen months, and just disappeared. You've never seen a letter from England come here?"

"Well, it's a most peculiar thing," she stammered.

"What strikes me as peculiar," he replied, "is that Sally should tell me a pack of lies. I wouldn't have believed that she could tell even one."

"She couldn't!" she cried quickly, "not to you, Tim! Not even one!"

"Sally dear," he said, taking both her hands, "can't you see that you're making me miserable?"

"Oh, Tim," she cried as he drew her close to him, "I didn't mean to, but I did want to make sure! You see I *am* Sheila Derwent, really and truly, and I—I thought you'd think I'd followed you, whatever I said, and I thought I'd better confess that I had—"

"When you hadn't?"

"Well, look how impossible it seemed that such a chance meeting could occur. I didn't think you could possibly believe me if I told you the truth—"

"But I will. Tell me, Sally."

Sally wiped her eyes with the back of

her hand like a child. "Let's sit down again," she said more calmly, "though I've little enough to tell. When I heard about the will I nearly went off my head. Everything that occurred to you, as you've just told me, occurred to me. I could picture poor Tim Knight feeling that he simply had to come to my rescue, and hating me for it at the same time. So I said to myself, 'Well, it's only for a year,' and packed up and fled."

"Of course it's not so strange after all," she went on, "that you and I came to the same part of the world, because we're both keen on chickens, and there's no climate suits them like the Pacific Slope; but that I should actually come and work for you unknowingly was so utterly improbable that I felt sure you wouldn't believe it. So rather than be disbelieved over a thing like that, I said to myself, 'All right: say you followed him. If he really loves you he'll still want you for his wife, and if you really love him you'll be happy all the rest of your lives!'"

"And you do love me, Sally?"

"I'm Sheila," she reminded him shyly.

"And you do love me, Sheila dear?"

"Oh, Tim!" she cried with her arms round his neck. "I've loved you for weeks and weeks!"

But the really interesting part of the romance is that Tim Knight will never know the real truth; would not believe it, in fact, if it were handed to him by an angel, graven in bronze, from a miraculous mountain of fire; which is just as well, for Sheila's heart would break if anything happened to mar the perfect happiness of their lives.

Yet she will never cease to congratulate herself on having instinctively guessed that her cousin would be found on the Pacific Slope; nor will she ever forget the weeks of fruitless search from Victoria to the Kootenay Pass, or her final abandonment of the unworthy quest when she met and fell in love with Mr. Kay.



THE SAWDUST HERITAGE

By HAZEL PHILLIPS HANSHEW

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

ANCESTRY doubtless counts. It is, at any rate, the Least Common Multiple of our worldly existence, and gives us the entrée to a Society befitting our education. The Greatest Common Measure is Heritage—let scoffers say what they will.

Of the two, Raymond Cawcutt, twenty-three in years and nineteen-twenty-seven in outlook, possessed a goodly showing of the former, for which he entertained the Modern Young Idea's contempt. To the latter he had, as yet, given no thought. Or if he had, only to banish it with a wave of the hand as old-fashioned and completely out of date.

To put the case plainly, Raymond's life was made up of Pleasure, spelled with a capital "P." Like the proverbial butterfly, he was given to "flitting"—with the busy-bees of matchmaking mammas very close upon his coat-tails, their keen eyes upon his money-bags, and the memory of his maternal grandfather, who had been a lord.

For himself, Raymond laughed away the patrimony of his twenty-three summers in a good-natured grin for humanity, which had already etched a bunch of wrinkles at the corners of his nice mouth and in the crinkles round his merry eyes.

But don't dismiss Raymond airily as a creature of no account. He might have been a worker if his doting mother had thought otherwise for her only child. But she was one of those nervy, overstrung women who spend their lives pursuing germs, until they find what they seek, and perish as the result of their fearful complex.

Raymond, as a baby, lived on sterilised food and in a filtered atmosphere which would have embittered any other child with a less healthy mentality. Struggling up out of the hands of nurses and doctors and patent appliances, Raymond found himself

launched upon the world with a hefty bank balance, and with both parents dead as the result of over-worry—entirely upon his account.

He found himself, indeed, with a heritage of bone and muscle which would have done credit to a prize-fighter, and with about as much horse-sense in his head as could lie comfortably upon a sixpence.

And now, mark you, this is where my G.C.M. comes stalking in on its ghostly feet. That G.C.M. was the final factor in Raymond's life, for his was a Sawdust Heritage. Not of the sanded bar, I'd have you to know, nor yet of the cleaver and the steel, and the striped apron of a butcher's calling. But there was Romance bubbling and sparkling its elixir in Raymond's veins, and the heritage had come about in this wise.

Far down the aisles of memory, in the dim dark days of his gay predecessors, Raymond had had an ancestor who had married a circus-girl. This same lady was shot out of the mouth of a cannon every evening at eight o'clock precisely, and for the modest remuneration of thirty shillings a week. The circus-girl had been beautiful, and the gay ancestor bored by the more patrician snobberies of his feminine equals. So the inevitable happened. They married, and so bequeathed to Raymond, over a period of four generations, a drop of the romantic blood of his great-great-great-grandmamma's equally romantic calling.

Like the touchstone of the ancients, it brought him a queer sense of seeing beneath surfaces, and by round-about methods to the feet of Miniature Marjorie of Minotaur Fame.

In case you are among the ignorant ones who have never heard of Miniature Marjorie or her Minotaur either, let me hasten to explain their existences. Miniature Marjorie was principal star in the circus of one Joshua

Beltring, and travelled with it wherever it happened to pitch its tents. She was somewhere in the neighbourhood of twenty, looking sixteen, with uncut yellow curls tumbling higgledy-piggledy over a tiny head like a Greek statue, and a pair of wide eyes that were like nothing so much as rain-wet lawn-daisies in the moonlight.

A gossamer, fairy-tale creature, this Miniature Marjorie, and, contrary to the generally accepted idea of the feminine members of her profession, quite the widest-eyed innocent extant.

The Minotaur, on the contrary, had known the world and had little illusions left about it. He was an old white horse of Flemish extraction (see fetlocks and collar) whose apology for a tail was amply hidden, during each performance, by a magnificent switch of horsehair. Twenty years of circus-life had made him as tame as a kitten, and ready to eat out of anybody's hand—provided of course that the hand was kind.

His broad back was as good as a table for the tiny feet of Miniature Marjorie to stand upon, and he knew to the minutest fraction of a second when to slacken his speed to permit of her jumping lightly through the flaming paper hoops of her act. For he had borne her mother before her, and would most probably bear the progeny of Miniature Marjorie herself, if the fates were kind enough to permit of his old legs galloping with some show of speed.

When Raymond and Marjorie met, the thing you are expecting happened. This is no "surprise" story, for human nature has a habit of running along certain grooves in a thoroughly understandable fashion known to us all.

Raymond fell headlong and dizzily in love. The circus, having made Pangar, where Raymond had a country seat, with champagne and cocktails and tennis-court, all complete, pitched its tents in Farmer Gadger's big meadow, which lay beyond the grounds of Raymond's house, and within good seeing distance of the terrace outside his dining-room, and began to make ready.

He spotted it immediately, and greeted it with his usual enthusiasm. The rest of his house-party laughed at his eagerness, teasing him in their light-hearted fashion, for theirs was not a Sawdust Heritage. But Raymond continued to wander away from the tennis-court and the dance-room, to where the great welter of canvas was being unstrapped from its lorry, towards the no-

mads' tents which called him with no uncertain voice.

The Terrace was the best vantage-point from which to watch proceedings. He seated himself astride a balustrade, imagining himself alone. But he was *not* alone. For in the Shades of Immortality which hung about him stood his great-great-grandmamma, gazing through the dividing veils at her grandson with something akin to wistfulness in her eyes. Here was a boy after her own heart. Here was a creature to whom the sawdust and the oranges and the busy hive of the circus-life were Romance inconceivable. He had only to be waked to the knowledge of it. She would wake him.

She did, by the simple method of letting her ghostly fingers trail lightly across the nape of Raymond's neck—which centre, so the scientists tell us, is the jumping-off point of our mentality. Raymond suddenly felt a strange thrill circulating through his veins, and making his skin go goose-fleshy.

"Great suffering godfathers!" he shouted to the silence which lay about him. "That's the life! Setting their blinkin' tents right under our noses, too! How perfectly priceless!"

From that identical moment the circus occupied every available spare corner in Raymond's rather empty young mind. For three days the preparations went on, and he sat watching them, face aglow, hot sun beating down upon it, for it was June and the warm summer nights and occasional warm summer days had come to England's shores at last. He sat there, with all his heart in his eyes, watching how the great tent, couched like some sleeping animal, whirled up suddenly upon its drunkenly swaying posts, to thrilling, animated life; listened with singing blood to the thwang of hammer upon tent-peg, and the *scree-eech* of saw through wood; smelled, with curiously distended nostrils, the poignantly sharp odour of new paint and varnish.

And he went back along the ages, past the haughty forbears rustling in their silks and satins, to where a little withered-up ghost-woman sat alone, holding a faded pink tarlatan apology for a skirt in her fingers, and a wistful, wicked expression in her twinkling ghost-eyes.

The third day he ventured down to the field. Here he hung about on the fringe of activities, like a schoolboy hoping for a job. Five hundred yards away from him a big, red-faced man in his shirt-sleeves,

with a clay-pipe hanging upside down from his lips, was wrestling with a wooden booth of broad dimensions. Perspiring, he looked round and spotted Raymond. He jerked a thumb in his direction.

"Here—you!" he shouted, being no respecter of persons when a "job" was on. "Lend a 'and, will yer? This yere Fat Lady's 'ut's like a blinkin' mansion!"

Lend a hand? *Would* he?

He lent both to such good advantage that in a jiffy the booth stood upon its feet in the cropped grass. And the red-faced man mopped his forehead with a scarlet bandanna,

"Thankee—thankee. Care to 'ave a look round?"

Raymond's heart missed a beat or two from sheer excitement.

"Rather! Thanks awfully and all that. Pretty big outfit you've got here. And I say!"—pointing to a gigantic poster which a lean youth was pasting into place—"who the dickens is that? What a perfectly priceless kid! Does she really look as lovely as all that, or was the artist drawing upon his imagination? Pictures *are* so misleading, I find!"

The poster depicted a dancing angel with



"He could only stare, and stammer, and grind a heel into the springy turf, because the fairies had seen fit to shackle him in their gossamer chains, and had poured moonshine into his upturned face."

and eyed Raymond's muscles with genuine admiration.

"S'welp me!" he ejaculated. "You're a strong 'un, I must s'y! Sort er chap we needs for the circus-business these days. Not too many of 'em about, I kin tell you. Want a job?"

This last was said with a grin, for already Josh Beltring's quick eyes had noted the smart pull-over and the tweed plus-fours of his rescuer—and come to his own conclusions.

"Well—not a regular one, thanks all the same!" returned Raymond, offering his gold cigarette-case.

Beltring chose one with dignity, pocketing his empty clay.

flying curls of spun gold, clad in the thinnest of thin gauze dresses, and the pinkest of pink silk stockings, tripping it upon the light fantastic over the back of a perfect Pegasus of a horse which leaped round a ring comparable—in the artist's imagination at least—to a full-size school copy of the map of England.

Beneath this masterpiece Raymond read the words, "Miniature Marjorie, the World's Greatest and Most Daring Horsewoman, and her Magnificent Steed, the Minotaur, in their World-famous Act."

He stared at it, mouth ajar; meanwhile Beltring, setting a match to his cigarette, looked up above the tiny flame and saw another reflected in the blue depths of his

visitor's eyes. He put his fingers into the two corners of his mouth and emitted an ear-splitting whistle.

"Fetch the Miniature 'ere, Jimmy!" he told the boy who ran to his summons. "Sharp, now!"

Two minutes later Raymond and Marjorie were standing face to face. He found himself holding a hand that was soft as thistledown, and looking down into an uptilted face in which the eyes twinkled like laughing gentians, and the tangled curls under a sky-blue tam-o'-shanter bobbed and shook as Marjorie laughed with him and at him.

"Hullo!" said she, with a wide grin.

He felt like the shy boy at the party, all hands and feet.

"Hullo! . . . I say, sir, you were right after all! The poster isn't half good enough, what? When do you open?"

"To-night, at eight sharp," said Beltring, winking an eyelid, and jerking a thumb backwards over his shoulder. "Now then, me dear, orf you go. The Fat Lady'll be needin' you to 'elp with her corstoom to-night. Ta-ta. . . . What did I tell yer, young sir? Fair cherub, eh?"

He spoke, as it happened, to empty air. As Miniature Marjorie darted off like a swift minnow in the track of the Fat Lady's tent, Raymond, too, took to his heels. A mere "Hullo!" from those adorable lips of hers hadn't been enough to go on with. He wanted to hear her say, "Nice day, isn't it?" or, "Are you staying here long?" or again, "What's your name and where do you live?" And most of all, he wanted to hear her say, "I like you—very, very much." At any rate, it would be his fault if she didn't.

So the Faun had set off in pursuit of the Nymph—and found her seated upon the steps of the Fat Lady's caravan, with her lap full of orange satin and spangles, and her cheeks redder than was their wont. The sun made a tangled aureole of her yellow hair. One slender leg was tucked under her, the other dangled downwards, showing a generous length of mended wool stocking and the tattered edge of a sky-blue underskirt.

Jove! She was altogether too beautiful to be real! Raymond found speech torn from him and tossed away upon the wind. He could only stare, and stammer, and grind a heel into the springy turf, because the fairies had seen fit to shackle him in their gossamer chains, and had poured moonshine into his upturned face.

He was just an ordinary young man, who might have sold laces over the counter, instead of being the heir of a wholly distinguished lineage, such as his was. At last he found his voice.

"By Jove! You know, you *are* beautiful, Marjorie!"

After that it was all up with Raymond. Matchmaking mammas would henceforth dangle for his money-bags in vain. He had met the "One Girl"—and he knew it. Just the swift twanging of Cupid's bow, and the arrow had shot home. After the short conversation with her, in which they had discussed the possibilities of success for the circus in such a sophisticated atmosphere as Pangar, and how it was she could dance upon a horse's back without falling off—he'd ridden to hounds all his life, and taken many a toss at a high hedge, but as for *dancing* on his mare's flanks!—it was beyond the powers of anyone but a fairy-like creature such as she was).

"Wait and see! Wait and see!" mocked Marjorie, stitching on loose spangles with efficient speed. "If you'd been taught in your cradle like I was, you wouldn't find it hard. My mother was a circus-girl too. She rode the Minotaur before I did. He's a sort of family affair—like—like a title or silver plate, or somebody or other's necklace. We're just as proud of him, I can tell you."

After all this, Raymond went home. He found the house-party dispersed upon their several enjoyments, except one member of it. Stella Firth had been waiting for Raymond all the afternoon. He had promised to take her round the links before tea. And now it was after five o'clock, and no Raymond to be found.

She was, of course, furious. Particularly as she had spotted Raymond nipping lightly over the balustrade, and making off in the direction of the circus tents. If it had been another girl now—but a circus is a rather large and intangible sort of thing to compete with. And if she didn't get married this season—being twenty-three and hungry-eyed with much unsuccessful searching—she'd never hear the end of it from the family.

So she waited in the great hall, and refused tea at the hands of Jameson the butler, because, she said, she had promised to have it with Mr. Cawcutt.

"Very good, miss."

Jameson withdrew, and left her in the great hall—alone. She surveyed it with a keen eye for its dimensions. Rather good

rugs, but too many of them, and the place was dark. When she was mistress here, she'd make a few alterations. Take down those tapestries, and have another window cut along the staircase. And alter the arrangement of the old oak a little. Too crowded altogether. . . . Where *was* Raymond? So rude of him to forget an engagement, particularly with her! He must certainly be taught manners, if *she* were going to marry him. . . . Quarter-past five . . . half-past . . . twenty to six. . . . She was hungry, and getting angrier and angrier each minute. If the rest of the house-party should return and find her waiting for him, they'd never give her a moment's peace. The fires were banking into flame in her brown eyes when Raymond, leisurely smoking a cigarette, strolled in at last.

He saw her—and stopped, tossing the cigarette away.

"Oh, good heavens! I'd quite forgotten. We were due for a round on the links before tea, weren't we? Jolly sorry, Stella!"

"We *were*!" she replied acidly, very near to tears. "B-but as it happens I haven't had any t-tea. You're a beast to forget, Ray! It's that horrible circus! You've not been the s-same since it came here. Can't think what's the matter with you!"

"Bewitched!" he gave back with a little laugh. "Had a circus ancestress, y'know. And the lady's suddenly come out on top! But I'm awfully sorry, really, Stella! Hadn't I better ring for tea?"

"Please! Had yours, I suppose?"

"Yes—with a rippin' little girl in a blue tam-o'-shanter! Prettiest kid you ever saw, Stella! Yellow hair and blue eyes and all, just like a Christmas-tree fairy. Jolly little sport too! Rides a horse round the ring and does a fiery hoop stunt, I believe! I've taken a box for the week for the lot of us. It'll be fun—going in a crowd. And wait till you see my Marjorie!"

"His" Marjorie! Oh, she could have stamped her foot with fury at the possession in his voice. But stamping feet would acknowledge that she was jealous, and no man fancies a jealous woman, no matter how flattered he may be. So she sat down to the little tray which Jameson brought to her, and lifted a bored face to him.

"Oh, you needn't count me in the party, Raymond. I haven't a fancy for circuses. They're so *common*! And I've never been so badly off for friends of my own class that

I've had to hunt for them in a—travelling *troupe*!"

Rather good that. The sudden paling of Raymond's astonished face gave her an appetite. She had, somehow or other, managed to hit home. He left her to her triumph, and took the dog for a run before dressing for dinner.

From that moment, however, it was open war between them. After all, as Stella told her family, discussing the affair later, one had to be true to one's class. And a common circus girl——!

As for Miniature Marjorie, the plus-foured and pull-overed young man with the nice eyes had attracted her not a little. In all her wanderings under the careful chaperonage of "Uncle Josh" Beltring, she had never come across one of his kind before. And the memory of him rather took the edge off the more important anxieties which were worrying the whole company, of which she knew herself a responsible part.

Things were, to put it plainly, going very badly. So badly in fact that there had been a rumour, murmured to her by way of the Midget's squeaky little voice, that they would have to close down if Pangar proved the failure which the other towns had been. And she dreaded the thought of leaving all these dear friends and joining the chorus of some travelling company, which would doubtless be the only thing she was fit for, with no kind "Uncle Josh" to keep an eye upon everything relating to her welfare.

As to the others, well, the Fat Lady had got a distant relation who would help her if things really did turn out for the worst. And the Midget could do a whole day's work quite excellently, in spite of her half-day size. It was chiefly the future of "Uncle Josh" and the menagerie that caused her the most worry.

"Uncle Josh" was getting old—and so were the two moth-eaten lions, who had been his pals for twenty long years. But one can't take lions into lodgings. It wasn't done. They might take a fancy to the landlady—if they were not sufficiently fed. Tootles, the elephant, could of course find a home at the Zoo, but a pair of moulting old lions weren't so easy to settle. Tootles could earn her livelihood carrying small kiddies to and fro upon her broad back. But Sammy and Sally's future contained nothing more useful than acting as floor-coverings in the suburbs.

Really, there was no end to the worry

of it all. As for the Minotaur, well, that was her affair. A stable and a load of hay—surely she could somehow find that. Unless the young man in the plus-fours would be willing to buy him and give him a bit of comfort in his old age.

Sewing spangles on the Fat Lady's dress for that evening's performance, Marjorie gave herself up to these disastrous ponderings, until the tears began to fall, and she could no longer see to work. If only the young man in the plus-fours could come to their rescue, how splendid everything would be! He was such a very nice young man—and he obviously had money to burn, because he had told her, in the course of their conversation that afternoon, that he didn't work.

She had replied that he was lucky—only she didn't approve of young men idling and burdening a nation with their leisure. Her mother had always told her that they were the sort of people to avoid. Laziness was no excuse for living—those were her mother's exact words.

He had seemed a bit unhappy about that; so that if she asked him to buy the Minotaur, if things really did come to such a disastrous pass, he probably would do so out of kind-heartedness. He seemed a very kind-hearted young man.

At any rate, there were seven whole days before them. And in seven days anything might happen! "Anything" did—but it was not quite what Miniature Marjorie expected.

The Fat Lady came waddling back from "Uncle Josh's" tent, and took the orange satin dress from Marjorie's fingers. There was a suspicious moisture about her little pig's-eyes, gleaming out at her friend under the flabby eyelids. She shifted a pillow which had slipped from her armpit beneath the soiled kimono she wore. She had been "making-up" when the manager called her into conference.

"What news, Aunt Clara?" said Marjorie in a tight little voice.

"The worst, m'dear!" sobbed the Fat Lady, bursting suddenly into tears. "Josh Beltring says we're down and out, if we can't pull things tergether this week! He says we must all put our best foot forward this evening!—and wot sort of a best foot 'as a pore fat creature like me—wot's got nuthink but her size to recommend 'er to the public? Oh, it's a sad, sad world, Marjy—for fat and thin alike!"

It was. But it was to be a sadder one still,

for some of them, before that eventful evening was over.

As Raymond's house-party filed into the little flag-hung "box" that had been somehow arranged for them above the first tier of seats, he was immediately struck by the fact that the circus was putting on a brave face over a losing game. For many of those seats were empty, in spite of the handbills which had strewn Pangar for the last three days. When one can get the "pictures" for ninepence, the inhabitants of Pangar did not feel prepared to pay one shilling to see the sort of poor travesty of a thing which the film people could knock into the bottom of a cocked-hat.

The band struck up its opening march, with a sort of hectic gaiety which hid the bleak emptiness of its troubled heart. To a thudding of drums, the great crimson curtains at the back of the ring drew apart, and the show began. . . . Do you, reader, know the thrill of that first moment, when the curtains have rolled back, and Jacko, the clown, springs into your vision, a tumble of red and white frills? Do you know how the pungent smell of orange-peel rises up in the nostrils and mingles with that of the saw-dust and the smoke, and the odour of the animals, into an atmosphere which sends your blood singing, and lights a torch in your heart? Or have you grown past that last vista of fading youth, and let the world set its cold seal upon your pulses?

If so, let me beg of you to go no further in this story. Because Raymond was feeling all of these things, seated there beside Stella Firth—who of course had come at the last moment out of sheer curiosity to see this common creature who could wrest Raymond from her own firm clutches in a brief two hours of conversation.

Raymond had, in point of fact, gone back to his childhood's days. He wanted to get up in his seat and shout as the little boys were doing somewhere at the back of him. He wanted to suck oranges, and barley-sugar, and strew the wood floor with pungent peel for people to slip on, and flip the pips on his thumb and forefinger at the lady's black velvet hat in front of him, just to see whether he could hit that waving feather in it or not. He wanted to do the maddest, baddest, wickedest things that anyone could think of. And all because his was a Sawdust Heritage.

But of course he didn't. One can't. So he simply sat there and throttled those

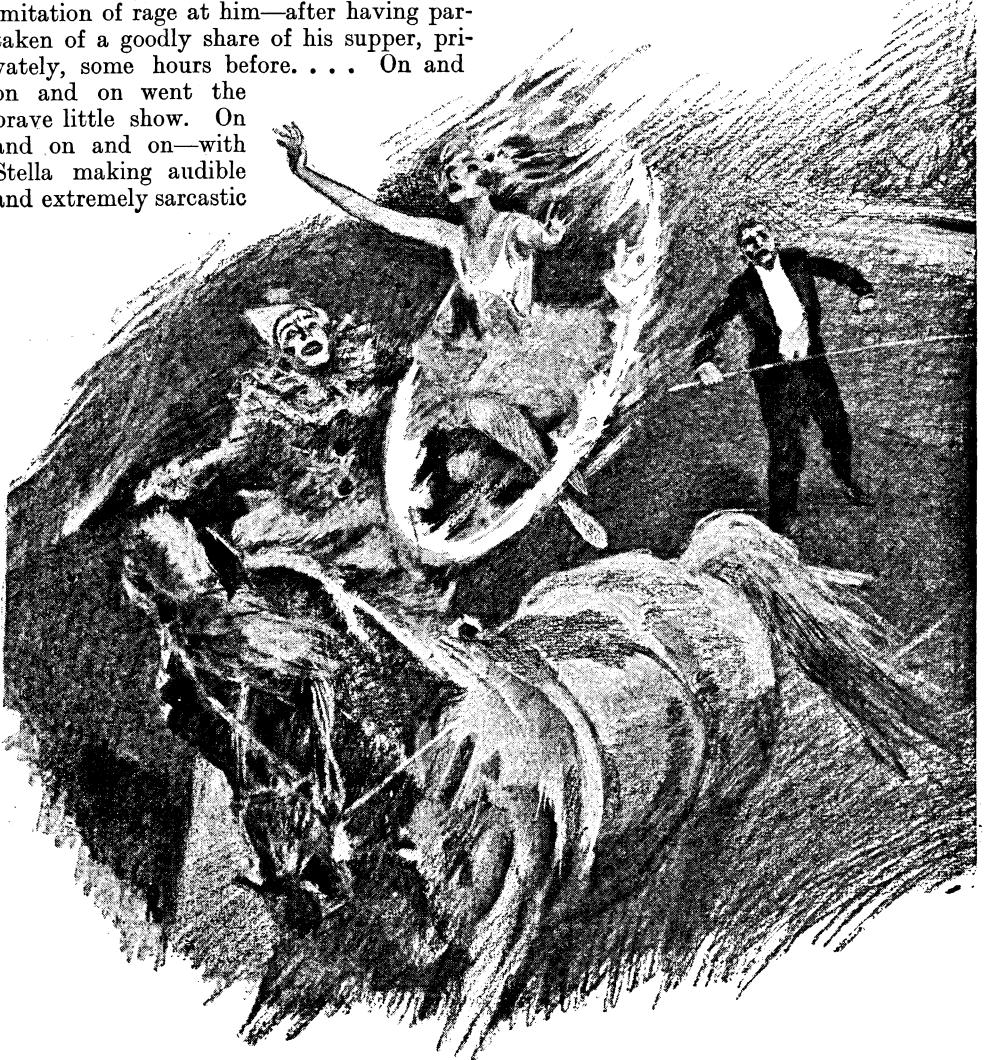
naughty desires at birth, and watched the show through dancing, delighted eyes—watched while Jacko threw cart-wheels, until his monstrous frill hung down and hid his painted face from view; watched while Tootles the elephant ambled in and mounted a ridiculous plush stool, many sizes too small for her, to balance an equally ridiculous red ball of enormous proportions upon her upturned trunk. He watched too how with much cracking of whip, and extravagance of gesture, the Great Lion-Tamer, Lemo, strode into the opened door of the gilded cage in which Sammy and Sally roared a very good imitation of rage at him—after having partaken of a goodly share of his supper, privately, some hours before. . . . On and on and on went the brave little show. On and on and on—with Stella making audible and extremely sarcastic

On, and on, and on.

(Heavens!—would she never stop? Didn't she know that so far as breeding went Miniature Marjorie was one up on her, hands down? That this sort of audible criticism wasn't done, except by a person who had poison in her veins, and wasn't responsible for her actions?)

Then of a sudden Raymond's heart, beneath his dinner-jacket, gave a sudden jerk.

Miniature Marjorie had ridden into the empty ring, a little slip of a creature in gauzy draperies which broke into a froth of white foam at her thigh



"She jumped—just a fraction of a foot out of true. The bobbing curls brushed against the flaming sides of the hoop and leapt into twisting ribbons of flame."

sallies, and keeping the crowd merry with the sharp wit of her stinging tongue.

and with a crown of silver tinsel shining in her yellow curls.

"By Jove—what hair! Pretty little thing, what!" exclaimed Percy Fenwick, screwing his monocle into his eye.

it already, haven't you, Ray dear?"

Raymond, being modern, merely shrugged. His eyes were upon Marjorie, riding round



"But Raymond was . . . plunging and lunging down the tier of excited people which lay below him, with death in his heart."

Stella emitted a shrill laugh. Her barbed tongue darted out like a serpent's between her pretty teeth.

"False, my dear old thing!—Blatantly false!" she said, tossing her shoulders. "Everyone's shingled nowadays—even common little circus-girls, but it takes a man to fall for that sort of 'Mother's darling' effect. Raymond's fallen for

the ring on her big white horse's back. The thrill of the circus was in his veins. He raised a hand for silence as Josh Beltring began to speak.

"Ladies and gentlemen! Miniature Marjorie, the world's greatest horsewoman, will now do her stupendously dangerous trick—jumping through 'oops of fire! The danger is so great that I must arst you to

sit still in your seats and not speak until the act is ended. Now then—orl ready?"

Marjorie, adjusting a girth on the Minotaur's back, in time-honoured custom, jumped to her feet, and bowed her acquiescence.

"*U-u-u-uppp!*" shrilled her clear young voice, and the Minotaur leapt forward, gallantly following directions from the cracking whip of his manager. Jacko, and three confrères, posted at the four corners of the ring, holding their huge paper hoops aloft, lifted their torches on high. The drums thudded out their rumble of sound like thunder over the quiet tent; the Minotaur galloped on.

A torch swept over the first hoop and transformed it into a ring of fire, as Miniature Marjorie sprang through it, emerging on the other side with a wave of her hand and a kiss for the gaping audience.

Raymond's feet were tense against the wooden floor. Good heavens!—what a thing to do for a living! What if the gauzy skirts should change all in a moment to a fiery pillar and turn his Marjorie into nothing more than a human holocaust for the public's love of novelty and risk? He couldn't watch her—he simply couldn't.

The second hoop was successfully manoeuvred. The third lay just in front of their box, high in the clown's upstretched hands. He opened his eyes to catch a sight of her pretty face, lifted in his direction. She was thinking of the bargain she would strike with him later on—if the show failed. He would be good to the Minotaur, she was sure. He had such kind, bright eyes.

She smiled and waved her hand at him—a little Christmas fairy, with bobbing golden curls. The accuracy of her vision was blurred for a moment by her fleeting thought. She jumped—just a fraction of a foot out of true. The bobbing curls brushed against the flaming sides of the hoop and leapt into twisting ribbons of flame.

"Oh!" screamed Miniature Marjorie, clutching hands to her head, and swaying dizzily upon her seat. "Oh, help—*help!*"

Then she fell from the Minotaur's broad back, and lay there in the sawdust, like a child's broken doll.

"Good heavens!" said Percy Fenwick, dropping his monocle. "That's torn it! I say, Raymond—"

But Raymond was gone. Over the edge of the box he climbed, plunging and lunging down the tier of excited people which lay below him, with death in his heart. Someone cursed him for his clumsiness; his heel

struck a woman's hat as it lay in her lap, crushing it as if it were an eggshell. Its owner squeaked, and hurled her opinion of him into the general din.

Somehow he reached the ring—and Marjorie lying there, with her head wrapped up in a horse-blanket. He pushed the kneeling men aside, and caught her up in his arms. Didn't they know that she belonged to him for ever and ever—that his was a Sawdust Heritage, and he had come into it at long last?

"Give her to me!" he demanded in a pent-up, husky voice.

They gave her to him, and he carried her out through the crimson curtains, with old Josh Beltring close upon his heels, issuing orders in his harsh, uneducated baritone.

"Git a doctor, someone! Noaw then, sir, lay 'er down 'ere! My little Marjy! If anythink 'appens to 'er, I'll never enter a ring again, so 'elp me! 'Ere, what yer goin' ter do with 'er? I'm 'er legal guardian I'd 'ave you ter know!"

"I don't care what you are! I'm going to take her to my home—the Court—and have the best doctors in the land to look after her, that's what I'm going to do!" gave back Raymond heatedly, tossing the words over his shoulder as he strode on through the night. "My car's here, and you can come along with me if you like. . . . Hi—Simpson! Lend a hand, will you? This young lady's hurt and I want to get to the Court as quickly as I can. Drive like hell, man. . . . You coming, sir?"

Josh Beltring eyed him through narrowed lids. Dash it! the lad was a man for all his stylish clothes. He shot out a huge paw.

"Got to see the show through, sonny. But I guess she's safe enough in *your* 'ands! . . . A black crow settled on my tent this mornin'. I might er known somethink of the sort would 'appen. I'll come up later, me boy!"

Then the long, seemingly endless drive of seven minutes to the Court, with Miniature Marjorie lying inert in his arms—and the future suddenly assured.

When Marjorie stirred up out of the mists of unconsciousness the night was far advanced—a fact of which she knew nothing. She was only dimly conscious of the pain in her head, and the strangeness of her surroundings. She lay in a bed such as she had read about in history-books, and imagined only kings and queens slept in, a great, canopied affair, hung with soft blue velvet,

with herself snug and warm under an eider-down which was surely a dream of luxury come true.

Through her pain-wracked mind crept the memory of someone's voice, whispering to her down the silences, telling her that she was loved and cared for, and would be guarded to her life's end. But of course that was all part of her dream. The main thing was to get this bargain about the Minotaur settled before things went any further. For she knew, with her shrewd business knowledge, that without her the circus could not go on.

It was the end—the end of everything. Sammy and Sally would go to the slaughter-house, and old Josh Beltring to the wall. She did not know which was the worst place to end up in. They both seemed very bad. Well, if the Minotaur were settled, that would be something. That matter must be got over as quickly as possible. Her poor head hurt so!

"Please!" she began, sitting up suddenly, "may I speak to the young m-man in the p-pull-over? I don't quite remember his n-name."

He rose from the shadows at the foot of her bed. He had not stirred away from them all the long hours she had lain there unconscious.

"I'm here, Marjorie. Fairy-child! You're better! Thank God for that! Don't talk, please—doctor's orders. I daren't disobey them else he'll turn me out."

She lifted a trembling, uncertain hand. Were there two young men down there at the bottom of the bed, or only one? She really couldn't be sure, she felt so funny.

"Please—I must. The circus. It's over—finished. All my fault too! This was the last week—the last hope. And now—they haven't had even a c-chance. Please, Mr.—P-Pull-over, will you b-buy my Minotaur, and give him a g-good home?"

He moved to the side of the bed and, seating himself, very gently took her hand. She saw, through the rising mists of weakness, that there were tears in his nice eyes.

She supposed he was sorry—he seemed such a very nice young man, the sort of person who would make a good friend, who would certainly never let her down. Fighting unconsciousness with all her dominant young will, she put her other hand out to him. The warmth of his touch was some queer panacea of comfort, the reason for which she did not know.

"Please—buy—the Minotaur!" she begged.

He bent a little forward, searching her eyes.

"Don't talk. Only listen. I'll buy the whole blessed circus—on one condition, and set every man-jack of the company on his feet. Mr. Beltring's told me the story. We've had some hours' confab while you've been—sleeping, and come to all sorts of arrangements. You see, the circus is in my blood too! I'd an ancestress—a young lady who used to be shot out of a cannon. I've only just made her acquaintance. And after what you said about working, well, I didn't see any real reason why I shouldn't be the Proprietor of the World's Most Wonderful Circus as well as anyone else. It's better than loafing, anyway, eh, Fairy-child?"

Against his orders, she spoke, her blue eyes suddenly wide, the pain-wracked lips ajar.

"And the—condition, Mr. P-Pull-over?"

"Name of Raymond—the rest don't matter. Oh, really, there's no condition—it's taking a mean advantage. But I love you, Fairy-child, and I want you to stay here, with the Minotaur, for ever. How'd you like that, eh?"

"Oh, M-Mr. P-Pull-over, blue's my favourite colour!" she murmured inconsequently, stroking the sapphire velvet of the curtain at her side. "I—I don't know *what* to s-say!"

"Say 'Raymond,' darlingest!" he whispered, and bent to kiss the travelling fingers.

So she said it. It sounded rather nice to say—a pretty, loving sort of name.





THE GLEN OF GREEN RUSHES.

BY ALICE E. GILLINGTON.

WILL you let me breathe the sweetness
Of the honey o' the ling ?
Will you let me cool my fingers
In the white-sanded spring ?
Will you soothe me with the silence that the
dark nights bring
To the glen of the green rushes ?

When the rushes are a-flowering,
Russet, grey and brown,
As the speckled breast-feather
And the red-tipped crown
Of the bird that builds its nest of moss and
willow-down ;
In the glen of the green rushes.

Before the rime and hoar-frost
Covers every rushen blade ;
Before the purple passes
From the heather-glow i' the glade ;
And the snow on the branches has a deeper
silence made
In the glen of the green rushes ;—

Will you let me hear the story
Which those brown birds used to sing ?
Will you fill me with the gladness
Of the honey o' the ling ?
And O ! Will you let me stay my long day's
journeying,
In the glen of the green rushes ?

MRS. FILMER

By C. KENNETT BURROW

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AT one time Filmer and I had been on pretty intimate terms; we liked each other for what we were and also, maybe, for what we were not. And our friendship was the closer, perhaps, because we didn't see too much of each other. He was abroad a good deal, looking after the interests of a company with which he was associated, while I stuck in London, adding what I could to a small inherited income by painting pictures that there was no rush to purchase. We had been to one of the smaller public schools together, and then Filmer went up to Cambridge, where he took a pass degree. By that time I had come into my slender patrimony and set up a studio.

When Filmer was in town we managed to meet once a week, and when he was away we exchanged letters, though neither was a good correspondent. He was steadily successful financially. Now and then I took a jump forward, but as these jumps were usually followed by static periods, or even slithers backward, I couldn't regard my career with much enthusiasm. However, I was happy enough, and if my ambition wilted and my ideals became a little damaged—well, I felt all the more at home in the world.

Then Filmer married. I had lost sight of him for a couple of years when I had a note asking me to stay for a week-end with himself and his wife at a house he had taken in the Cotswolds. I felt a little hurt that he hadn't told me earlier about his marriage; but of course I accepted the invitation.

He met me at the station and ran me out to a village about three miles away, the road rising steadily the whole distance. He drove the car himself, and it struck me that he was nervous about it; perhaps that was why he spoke so little. There was no doubt, however, that he was as glad to see me as I was to see him, but I felt that he had changed, that it would be necessary to re-discover him, as it were, before our old intimacy could be re-established. Perhaps

I, too, had changed, but I didn't think so. It must be Filmer's marriage that had made the difference; marriage always did make a difference. So far he had not said a word about his wife.

We reached a charming village, tucked away in a fold of the hills, and almost hidden by pear- and plum-blossom. He slowed down the car at the top of a final rise, just beyond the church, which was on the left, and turned abruptly to the right into a by-way, grass-bordered and sandy, over which the car moved noiselessly.

"Here we are," Filmer said. I had been so intent on looking ahead that I had not noticed the gate by which he had pulled up. It was an ordinary swing gate, and beyond it were two diverging ways, separated by an immense clump of rhododendrons. He sounded the horn, and as I got out of the car a man appeared from behind the rhododendrons and took charge of it. As it moved off Filmer took my arm and we passed round one side of the rhododendrons.

"Isn't it perfect?" Filmer said.

It was perfect. I could have painted it and given some kind of impression—every man to his trade—but I can't describe it so fluently in words as I might have done with a brush. I saw a lawn, a sunk fence, and above and beyond that another lawn that swept up to the walls of a Jacobean house, "green to the very door." If you add to this, diffused sunshine, a tremulous sense of spring and tenderness of shadow, you will get an idea of the effect.

"It's almost too good to be true," I said.

"That's how I feel about it sometimes." As we slowly approached the house I thought Filmer leant rather heavily on my arm.

"You're tired," I said. "Does driving take it out of you?"

"No; but I confess that I do feel a bit fagged to-day. I had a lot of business affairs to attend to yesterday. I only go up to town for directors' meetings, but a lot of stuff is sent to me here."

"You're supposed to be a man of leisure, but you're not?"

"That's about it," he said.

The front door was open, and as we reached the three shallow steps that led up to it Mrs. Filmer appeared. She stood there smiling, alert, watching us. She gave me the impression that she was by no means prepared to take me on trust; I fancied that that there was even a challenge in her look.

"I'm delighted to see you, Mr. Brent."

I should have liked to tell her that I didn't believe it, but of course I said the usual conventional thing instead. Filmer took me up to my room, and, after fussing round to make sure that everything was in order, left me. I unpacked my modest suitcase and then sat by an open window that overlooked the two lawns. Beyond the now hidden road rose a gentle slope of gorse-starred green, and beyond and above that nothing was visible but the sky, across whose serene blue great white clouds sailed from the north-west. I abandoned myself to a sense of complete seclusion.

Just as I rose to go downstairs Mrs. Filmer emerged from the shadow of the house and walked slowly across the near lawn; when she reached the sunk fence she turned and stood looking towards the house, letting her gaze traverse it deliberately. I thought her eyes avoided the window of my room, and it suddenly occurred to me that she was posing for my benefit. This was, I told myself, an unworthy thought, but it persisted. And then I smiled at my own punctiliousness, for, after all, why shouldn't she pose? She was a beautiful woman, and beauty has its own sanctions.

At first I hadn't been sure that she was beautiful; perhaps that instinctive feeling of hostility had a little blinded me. But now, though that feeling remained, it faded into the background, and I looked at her with something approaching detachment. Her complexion had the slightly flushed whiteness—almost pallor—of certain roses; her eyes, large and wide apart, were of an extraordinarily deep blue; her lips had the curve usually associated with Greek sculpture. Her hair was black, almost lustreless, and yet somehow giving an impression of light.

When at last I went downstairs I found Filmer in his study, turning over a pile of papers on his writing-table. As he swung round to face me I noticed that his hair was turning grey and that his face was more

deeply lined than I had at first observed. I judged that I must look five years younger than he, though we were about the same age. Involuntarily, I thought of Mrs. Filmer, standing out there in the sunshine, breathing vitality. I found myself pitying Filmer.

"Can't you leave that wretched work alone for a bit?" I said.

"I will while you are here—I promise that. How are things with you?"

"Pretty much as usual. I have enough to eat, and I sleep with an easy conscience. What more can a man want?"

"Lucky beggar!"

"It isn't luck," I said; "it's the result of hard work, though you may not believe it. You see, I've discovered that I'm not a genius, and that saves a lot of trouble."

"You have talent, and that's enough," he said.

"A little, but not enough. However, life's an entertaining affair so long as you don't take it too seriously."

"But suppose the seriousness is forced upon you? Suppose you can't see anything else but just that?"

"Consult a doctor," I said.

"Of the body or the soul?" Filmer was so obviously in grim earnest that I felt uncomfortable. This was the new Filmer whom I had yet to understand. In the old days, though he had always had a more grave outlook on things in general than I, he had also been capable of appreciating the lighter side and had derived immense amusement from the fantastic shows of the human spectacle. Probably he was as conscious of these as ever, but something had happened to atrophy the sense of comedy.

Before lunch he took me round the garden at the back of the house; it was too formally arranged to please me entirely, but, shielding it from the north-east, there was a narrow wood of wild cherry trees whose white-blossomed branches gave me a shock of beauty; they suggested a delicate loveliness too visionary to be of earth. And when Mrs. Filmer advanced from beneath that swaying canopy of bloom she, too, seemed almost unreal—a different woman from her I had watched from my window. She was completely in the picture, as it were, but now it did not occur to me that there was any trace of pose.

"This little wood, Mr. Brent," she said, "is worth all the rest of the garden."

"Yes—at the moment," I admitted.

"Unfortunately wild cherry blossom doesn't last long," Filmer said.

"What does that matter?" his wife asked.

"If beautiful things lasted too long we should grow tired of them."

"Then your theory is that a succession of beautiful things is better than permanent beauty?" I said.

"That's nature's way, isn't it?"

"It looks like it, and it's often human

I laughed and glanced at Filmer. He didn't appear to have been listening. Then the luncheon bell rang.

I confess that during my stay (the week-end extended itself to five days) I couldn't make Mrs. Filmer out. One thing was clear; she was not so content with that delightful house and its surroundings as Filmer appeared to be. It was not that she didn't appreciate the beauty of it all—her



"She was attracted by his musical gift; he both played and sang admirably, though his manner of doing both irritated me beyond measure."

nature's way, but it isn't the best way." She glanced at me with a quick lift of the eyebrows.

"Then you prefer stagnation to change?"

"I hope not. All I mean is that constant change, though it may be from one desirable thing to another, isn't the best way of getting the most out of life."

"What is the best way?"

"Holding on to one thing like the very deuce!" I said.

"Ah!"

artistic sense, indeed, was finer than his—but it didn't seem to satisfy her. Perhaps there was nothing surprising in this; a young and supremely attractive woman might easily become a little bored by the seclusion and dearth of society. They were on excellent terms with their poorer neighbours, but most of the richer ones didn't appeal to them. These richer ones, so far as I could see, were pleasant and entertaining enough, but Filmer had always been an exclusive fellow, and his wife,

I gathered, matched him in that, though the particular quality of her exclusiveness eluded me.

She always seemed glad, however, to see a man named Sturmer; he dropped in casually to meals and hung round her like a rather too inquiring and amiable dog: the kind of man I could never stand. He was young, mechanically good-looking, silkily polite, and vastly conceited. It was plain that he was infatuated with Mrs. Filmer; I could not imagine that she might be attracted by him personally. But she was attracted by his musical gift; he both played and sang admirably, though his manner of doing both irritated me beyond measure. He posed and attitudinised with disgusting self-consciousness. To me Mrs. Filmer soon became frankly friendly. This, naturally, pleased me, though I continued to wonder why she had been suspicious at first.

The evening before the day fixed for my departure, when Filmer and I were alone after dinner (Sturmer had followed his hostess to the drawing-room) Filmer said:

"Billy, old man, I want you to paint my wife's portrait." This was so unexpected that it rather took me aback, the more so because, all that day, I'd been thinking that I should like to try my hand at so provocative a subject. But I hadn't suggested it because I was by no means sure that Mrs. Filmer would approve.

"Why do you hesitate?" he asked.

"Not," I said, "because I shouldn't like to do it."

"Then why?"

"To put it bluntly, are you sure that Mrs. Filmer considers me a good enough man for the job?"

"As a matter of fact, she has the highest opinion of your work."

"Then you must have been boosting me," I said, "for you haven't any of my later and best stuff here."

"She's seen some in exhibitions. When I made the suggestion to her she jumped at it."

"In that case I shall be delighted to have a shot."

"And of course," Filmer said, "I shall pay you for it. I make that condition beforehand. If I didn't, you're quite silly enough to refuse payment when the thing was done."

"As a rule," I said, "I receive payments with joy and thanksgiving, but in this case——"

"You'll receive it in this case too, or you won't do the work at all. My dear man, I can afford it. I don't work for nothing myself."

"Then have it your own lordly way," I said. "By the way, this is excellent Madeira. Why has Madeira gone out of fashion?" I refilled my glass.

"Heaven knows! Why does any good thing go out of fashion?" He filled his own glass, raised it, and added: "To the luck of the portrait."

From the drawing-room came the notes of a piano and Sturmer's voice. He was singing one of Cyril Scott's songs—"The White Knight," I think—and he sang it extraordinarily well: Sturmer himself not being visible, I could enjoy it. Filmer, too, listened intently.

When the song was ended he said, with a quiet abruptness:

"Have you noticed that my wife isn't altogether satisfied here?"

"I've noticed that she sometimes seems rather restless."

"And how she's continually hankering after town?"

"Yes," I admitted. "But she's fond of this place, all the same. I suppose she wants to see more of what people call life, though it does most of them precious little good."

"That's natural enough," Filmer said. "And no doubt you've wondered why I don't give her the chance. You've thought it strange, haven't you?"

"Just a little, perhaps." The music had begun again, and we listened in silence for a minute before Filmer said:

"I'm afraid of London."

"You!" I regretted the exclamation because, it being impossible to imagine that he was afraid of it for himself, his fear could only be for her.

"Yes, I," he said. "That's why I'm living down here. I prefer it to town, but it's often devilish inconvenient. . . . You look puzzled, Billy."

"I am," I said.

"Well, I'll let you into the secret. There's something wrong with my internal mechanism. Two specialists have told me that six months of town would probably finish me off."

Sturmer's voice was working up to a climax and I felt a sudden rage against the man.

"Hang that fellow!" I said.

"Why hang him? He can do one thing

well." Filmer was looking at me with a faintly amused smile. "My wife has a passion for music, though nowadays she will never touch it herself."

I was annoyed with myself for my foolish outbreak. Filmer's startling announcement had jolted me into it. After a pause I said:

"Does Mrs. Filmer know about this?"

"No. Ought I to tell her? Of course I knew nothing about it when we were married."

"I don't think there's any 'ought' about it. It's a question of expediency, isn't it? At present I take it that she regards your avoidance of town as rather selfish and pig-headed."

"I'm afraid so, though she's never put it that way. And it *is* selfish. You see, Billy, I'm more completely in love with her now than ever, and I don't want to die. If I knew that she'd be happier for my death I might have the pluck to face it, but I doubt it, even then."

"Of course she wouldn't be happier. Don't be an idiot. . . . My dear old man, I'm most awfully sorry about this."

"So am I," he said, with a chuckle that really had some amusement in it. "But about this portrait. That will give her a good excuse for a spell of town, and I can run up now and then. She has practically no friends there, but my brother will look after her, though she's sure to quarrel with his wife. And this will give me time to think things over."

"Are you sure," I said, "that it wouldn't be better for me to do the portrait down here?"

"My dear chap," he said, "don't you see that half the catch of the notion for her is that it should be done up there?" I did see, though it wasn't very flattering to me; however, I have few shreds of artistic vanity left. "So we'll consider it settled," he concluded. "Can you make a start next week?"

"Any time you like," I said.

The next morning Filmer drove me to the station; he was more like his old self, and I fancied that he looked younger again.

"It's a tremendous relief to have told you," he said. "That kind of trouble needs sharing with someone. . . . I'm sure the picture will be a success."

I didn't feel at all sure about it myself. I spent the time before the day fixed for Mrs. Filmer's arrival in mooning about,

wasting hours at the club, and working myself into a condition of nerves. I was worried about Filmer; it seemed absurd that he should hold his life on so fragile a tenure.

He brought his wife up to town himself. She was to stay, it appeared, in an hotel in Knightsbridge, the other scheme having fallen through. I gathered that Mrs. Filmer was pleased, and conjectured that she had engineered things to escape from the restrictions naturally imposed upon a guest. Filmer returned to the country the same evening.

She came to me for two hours every morning. At first she was radiant, like a creature freed. Though this added to her appeal as a subject, I resented it; it seemed like a reflection on Filmer. And I resented it all the more when, on the evening of the fourth day, she insisted on my dining at her hotel, and I found Sturmer there. It could hardly have been mere coincidence that brought Sturmer to town at the same time as Mrs. Filmer, and to the same hotel. I wondered whether Filmer knew about it. It was obvious, at any rate, that Mrs. Filmer did not wish to conceal the fact from me; indeed, it almost looked as though she revealed it to me in order that it might be passed on to him. I was puzzled, annoyed, and put out of key for my work.

But soon I was put still more out of key. All the radiance went out of Mrs. Filmer as colour fades from an evening sky. Day after day a grey melancholy seemed more and more completely to possess her; she passed from petulance to silence. I felt more irritated with her than sorry for her; I had a notion that whatever her trouble was, whether it had anything to do with Sturmer or not, she had brought it on herself. Anyway, to paint her as she was then would mean producing a portrait that neither she nor Filmer would be likely to approve. One day Sturmer turned up at my studio with her. A couple of days before I had laid aside the first canvas and made a start on another.

"Why don't you go on with that one?" he asked, pointing to the first.

"Because Mrs. Filmer," I said, "exercising the privilege of her sex, has chosen to show me another aspect of her personality, and the two can't be combined in one portrait." I was sorry directly I had spoken, for Mrs. Filmer looked scared, rose abruptly, and crossed the room to my easel. After a silence that made me horribly uncomfort-



a sudden sympathy. I forgot Sturmer's presence for the moment.

"I'll try," I said, "if you'll do your best to help me."

"The first's ever so much more like," Sturmer said.

"As a matter of fact, Mr. Sturmer," I said, "it isn't more like. But I'd rather paint Mrs. Filmer in that mood than in the other."

"Of course, of course," he said, and soon after took himself off.

Filmer had been up to town twice so far; that evening he came for the third time. He was depressed, and made no attempt to disguise the fact. After looking at the two unfinished attempts he said:

"I was profoundly sorry for her, but at the same time I could almost have laughed."

"I see you're in difficulties, Billy. So am I. I think I shall have to risk London after all."

"Don't be an ass!" I said. "Why should you? It doesn't look to me as though it suited your wife any better than it does you."

"I'm not so sure about that. Don't you

ab'e—I had the feeling that I had been brutal—she said:

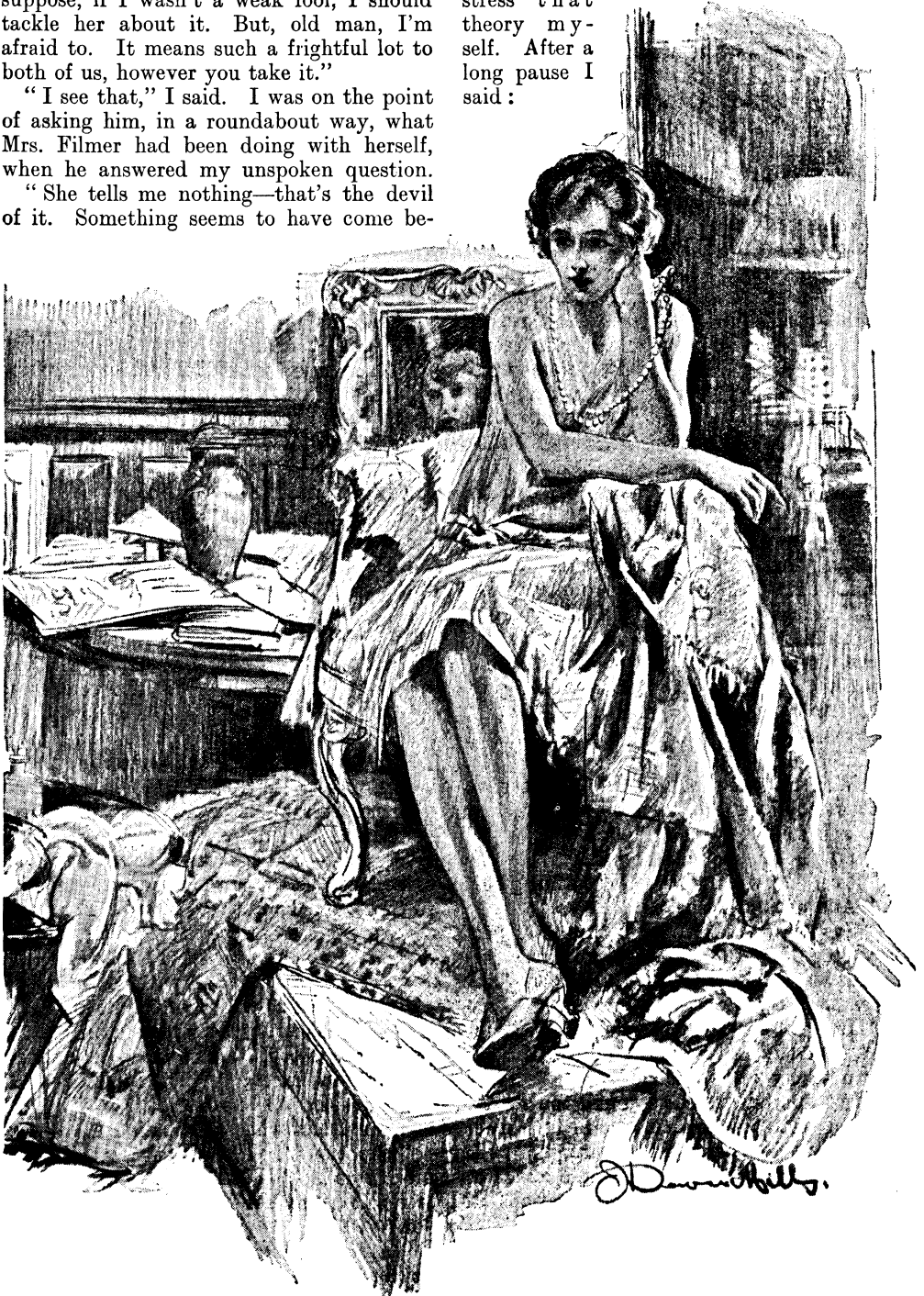
"Couldn't you manage to finish the first? I will try to look—more like that." There was a break in her voice that awoke in me

think it's possible that it suits her so well that the idea of returning to the country gets her down? That might account for this queer change in her, mightn't it? I suppose, if I wasn't a weak fool, I should tackle her about it. But, old man, I'm afraid to. It means such a frightful lot to both of us, however you take it."

"I see that," I said. I was on the point of asking him, in a roundabout way, what Mrs. Filmer had been doing with herself, when he answered my unspoken question.

"She tells me nothing—that's the devil of it. Something seems to have come be-

tween us." Could it be Sturmer? It was clear that he didn't connect Sturmer with the change in Mrs. Filmer, nor was I at all inclined to stress that theory myself. After a long pause I said:



" 'Then the old trouble returned; it was hopeless. I shall never sing again.' "

"Well, I'm going to finish that portrait. I've taken on the job, and I'm going through with it. . . . Things will straighten themselves out all right. Don't worry." The utter banality of this seemed, strangely enough, to reassure him; a dash of the commonplace may sometimes avert a tragedy.

It began to look like a tragedy, and I was convinced that the worst possible thing in the circumstances was a policy of drift. Things wouldn't, as I had inately remarked, straighten themselves out; they would have to be straightened out. What could I do to assist that process? I was determined to do something; Filmer was my friend.

Yet, when Mrs. Filmer came next morning at the usual time, my sympathy rushed out to her: she tried so pitifully to recapture that earlier radiance, to assume a mask of happiness. The failure was complete, almost grotesque. I laid down my brushes.

"The light's rotten this morning," I said. "I think I'll give you a rest to-day." She looked at me with the expression of a chidden child.

"What's wrong with the light? It's I that am rotten. I'm sorry that I'm so troublesome." There was more pleading than apology in her voice. I felt that my opportunity had come, but my mind was a blank as to how to use it. I was only conscious that this woman was suffering, and that Filmer was suffering, and that everything seemed upside down. All I could get out was:

"Why do you feel rotten?" She gave me a steady look, as though mentally testing me, and said:

"Has Denny noticed anything?"

"Yes. How could he help noticing?"

"And does he suspect?"

"Suspect what? Why should he suspect anything?" I had a sudden choking sensation in the throat. If Mrs. Filmer was going to make a confidant of me . . .

"It was done entirely for his sake," she said, "and it's all no use." With that she began to cry very quietly.

I got up and wandered round the studio, pushing canvases about, shaking a piece of tapestry viciously, and raising a little cloud of dust. I was never more at a loss in my life. After these demonstrations all I could say was:

"For heaven's sake, Mrs. Filmer, don't cry!" After a time she recovered herself and then, turning abruptly to face me, she said:

"Did he ever tell you anything about me?"

"Nothing."

"I needn't have asked. Of course he wouldn't—not even you. I shall have to tell you myself, if you will listen. It may do me good."

"What I want to hear," I said, "is something that will do you both good." She gave me a smile that had a flash of the old radiance.

"You're a faithful friend," she said. "We met in Milan, where I was studying as a singer. I was alone in the world, with just enough money to last, as I thought, until I could make a fortune with my voice. You know what confidence and ambition are in—children?"

"I do," I said.

"Then my voice failed. I overstrained it, but there was some throat weakness as well. It not only lost quality, but compass. If it hadn't been for Denny I should have gone under—heaven knows what would have happened. He gave me himself, gave me everything; but what could I give him?"

"He didn't want your voice," I said. "He wanted you." She shook her head.

"But my voice *was* me. Don't you see that—don't you understand?" she insisted. "Then, not long ago, I thought that the weakness had gone, that my voice was coming back. If only I could go to him and say, 'Here is my gift to you; it is all for you!'—then I should be content. I was afraid to say anything to him for fear of another disappointment. So Mr. Sturmer helped me; I practised at his house, until I felt sure—oh, so sure! And then you came, and there was the chance to come up to town, and I went to Tortoni. For a few days my voice was splendid; Tortoni was delighted. Then the old trouble returned; it was hopeless. I shall never sing again." She ended on a note of utter weariness.

I was profoundly sorry for her, but at the same time I could almost have laughed.

"It must have been bitterly disappointing," I said. "I know what it would mean to me if I lost what little skill I have—"

"I'm not thinking about myself," she interrupted. "I don't care a bit for my own sake, only for his. You believe that, don't you?"

"Almost," I said. "But you wouldn't be human if you weren't sorry for your own sake as well. And you are very human, Mrs. Filmer, except in one particular."

"And what is that?"

"It isn't human—anyway, it doesn't seem to me to be human—to suppose that Filmer loved you for your voice. That was part of you, and added to the charm, no doubt. But he'd have loved you just as much if you'd been able to sing no better than a sparrow. Men don't fall in love with voices—sane men, I mean—they fall in love with women."

"Most men, perhaps, but he's different."

"My dear lady," I said, "don't distract yourself with an illusion. He isn't different; not, at any rate, in that respect. If you'd recovered your voice it wouldn't have increased his devotion to you. But the fact that you tried, and failed, possibly might increase it."

"Do you mean that I ought to tell him?"

"That's precisely what I do mean. He's been a good deal troubled lately. You can relieve him with a word. Get back to the country; that's better for you both."

"Shall I go at once—take him without warning?" She rose, flushed and eager,

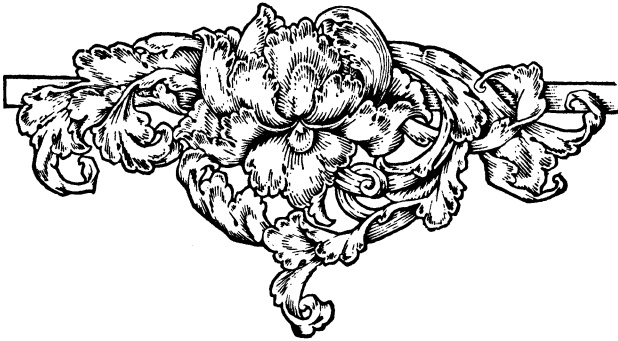
splendidly vital again. I was amazed that so beautiful a woman should have imagined that her voice had much to do with a man's love. In some ways there was a great deal of the child in her.

"Go," I said, "on condition that you come back and let me finish that portrait. I can return to the first attempt now."

"Hadn't you better come and finish it down there?"

"No," I said. "I'm going to finish it where I began it. That's part of the contract."

As she was about to leave Sturmer called. He received her announcement of an immediate journey in silence, and the adoring dog-look came into his eyes. I liked him at that moment, for I realised that his devotion to Mrs. Filmer was blameless; it was the generous devotion of a successful artist to one who might have been infinitely greater than he if fate had not robbed her of her gift. But now her grief for that loss had been resolved in an immeasurable gain.



CONCERNING A PRODIGAL.

COMMON SENSE said: "Let him suffer;
Firmly let the black ox tread."

Grace said: "If he comes I'll give him
Welcome, aye, with board and bed."

Long stood Kindness in the doorway,
Hoping he might chance to pass.

Love went after him to world's end,
Bare foot over broken glass.

FAY INCHFAWN.

*Author of "Poems From a Quiet Room," "Songs of the Ups and Downs,"
"Sweet Water and Bitter," etc.*

CHOOSING A CAR

II.—THE MEDIUM-PRICED MODELS

By CECIL B. WATERLOW

TOWARDS the end of last summer, at a wayside hotel in the heart of the Hautes-Pyrénées, I fell into conversation with the owner-driver of an Austin "Twelve." He was taking two passengers and a heavy load of luggage over some of the stiffest mountain passes to be found anywhere, and getting along very well; and we naturally talked about his car and mine, and others also. It is a good moment now, in connection with the Olympia Show, to recall the trend of this conversation.

The Austin "Twelve" has certain advantages over cars in the cheapest class, such as those discussed last month; and, on Pyrenean passes the most important of these was realised to be its four-speed gear box. If you buy a car the price of which is slightly above that of the cheapest, you can have four speeds, instead of three or only two. By no means all cars in the medium-priced class have four speeds, but at any rate you have the choice; and the Austin "Twelve" may well be taken as an example, because it is a thoroughly representative, popular British family car, in the class that comes next above the cheapest.

There are many people who argue that four speeds as compared with three are an unnecessary complication, especially now that engines are so excellently flexible compared with those of early days. But I venture to say that none of these people can have climbed with a heavy load the 8,000 feet pass leading over from France into the little Republic of Andorra! That road, which has to be seen to be believed, and other byways of the Alps and Pyrenees, are really a sufficient answer to their argument. If you are stalled on a stony bend with a gradient of about 1 in 3, and if your gear box provides an emergency first-speed

ratio of about 20 to 1, then you have nothing to fear; you can creep slowly round, without slipping or otherwise ill-using the clutch and without racing the engine.

If I pay something above the bottom price for a car, I expect it to be able to take me into the Republic of Andorra from France, or anywhere else that wheels can go. My own 16/45 h.p. Wolseley "Light Six" has four speeds with a first gear—never required on English roads—in the neighbourhood of 20 to 1, otherwise I would never have considered it.

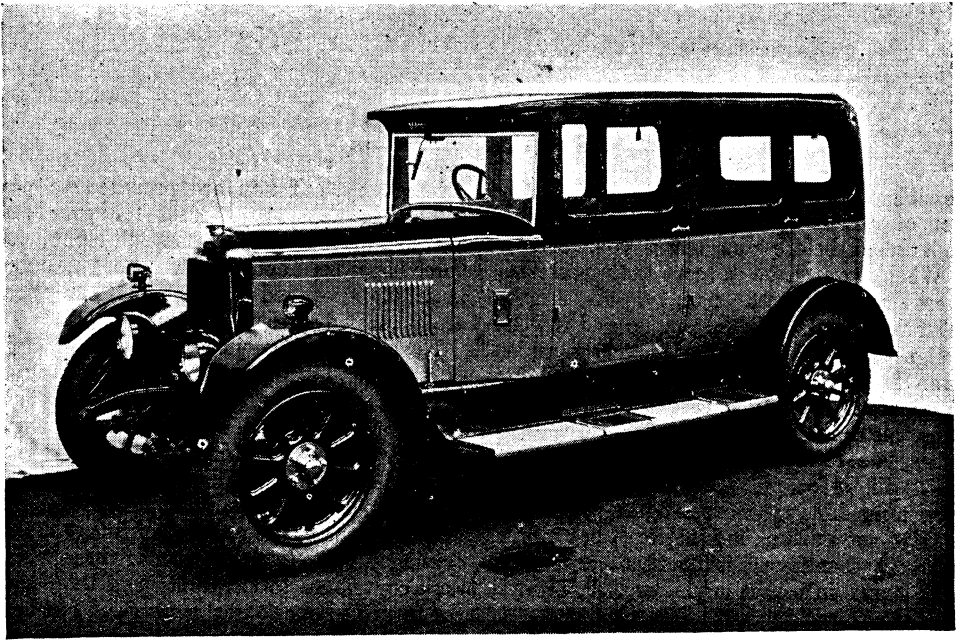
One likes to be fair in discussing any controversial matter. If you can afford to pay a price getting perilously near the £1,000 mark, you might buy a six-cylinder Voisin hailing from Paris, or a straight-eight Marmion from across the Atlantic, and drive either of them over the pass into Andorra or anywhere else in the mountains, although they both have only three-speed gear boxes. In these expensive cars the engine's reserve of power and "revving" capacity are sufficient to enable them to do without extremely low emergency first speeds. But in the case of cars such as the 16/45 Wolseley, the Austin "Twelve," the Hillman, Standard, and new Wolseley four-cylinder models, the Lea-Francis "Light Six," and a number of others also in this class, the provision of four speeds has another advantage beside emergency use. The steps between the gear ratios are not so great as they would necessarily be were only three speeds provided. Therefore, gear-changing is easier: less skill is required in judging the relative speeds of engine and car as you make the changes.

For the sake of fairness again a small advantage must be mentioned that most three-speed arrangements possess as com-

pared with their four-speed rivals. Manœuvring in a confined space, such as a crowded garage, it is often necessary to "back and fill," i.e. to go backwards and forwards several times in succession. With a three-speed gear the change from first to reverse and *vice versa* is made simply by pushing or pulling the lever straight forwards or backwards, whereas, with a four-speed box, it is usually necessary to perform more complicated movements.

There is another outstanding difference between the cheapest cars and some of those in the price class next above. It is so out-

without the other. It would seem as though some makers have considered that a six-cylinder engine in a comparatively light chassis does not call for four forward speeds, or that the provision of such gears, with a few other luxuries perhaps, on a car with only four cylinders, may make up for engine deficiency. You will have noticed that, for reasons already partly stated, my own recent choice fell upon a car with both features, namely, the 16/45 Wolseley; and the Lea-Francis "Light Six" may also be mentioned as another honourable exception to the one-feature rule in its class.

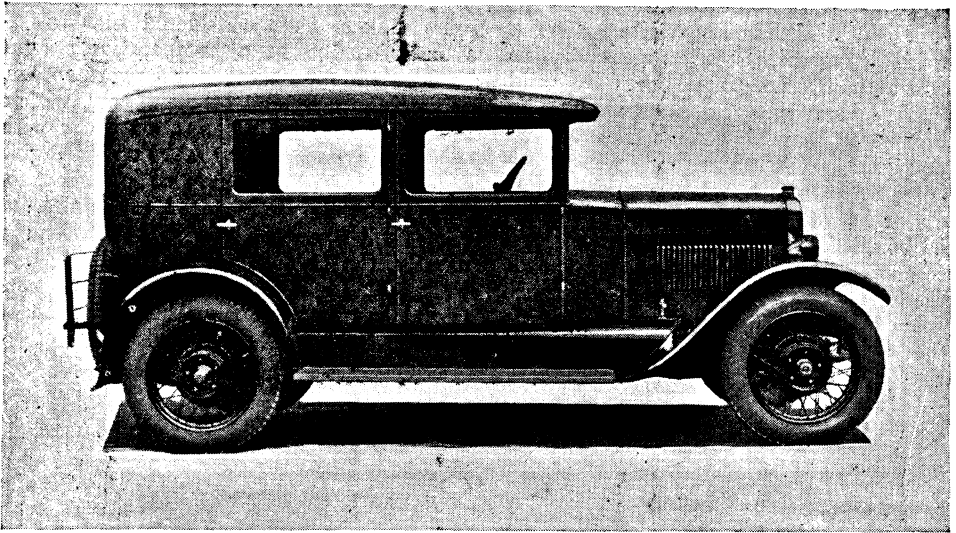


SINGER 6-CYLINDER COACH-BUILT SALOON.

standing, such a constant topic of conversation whenever automobiles are discussed, that you may wonder why I did not mention it sooner. By paying the higher price you can, if you wish, not only have four speeds instead of three, but six cylinders instead of four.

At the risk of becoming tedious I shall have quite a lot to say presently about the technical advantages of six-cylinder engines in general, and some of the new, cheap "light sixes" in particular. Meanwhile, it is important to notice that many cars in the price class we are considering, namely, from about £250 to £500, have one of the two important features just mentioned

Before buying a car it is important to find out what are its gear ratios. There has been a tendency of late years to make the top gear ratio, or direct drive, unduly low. Especially is this the case with some three-speeded "light sixes" recently introduced. Inexpert drivers dislike gear-changing. They want to be able to do almost everything on top. Experts, on the other hand, enjoy using their gears. They get far more out of their engines that way. Consequently, and rightly, they dislike a car that is *under-geared*, that has a top gear ratio lower than about 5 to 1, that is to say; because, with such gearing, the engine is turning too fast at normal touring speeds and the car's



HILLMAN 14 H.P. FABRIC SALOON.

possible maximum is reduced. This question of gear ratios is certainly a matter to be studied before you make your choice.

When you have a car that possesses these two features, namely, an almost vibrationless six-cylinder engine and a well-designed four-speed gear box, you have under your hands and feet a most marvellous instrument, the magic carpet about which Orientals dreamed long ago, something that raises you to a higher plane of existence. You will, of course, soon begin to hanker after a machine in the four-figure-price class that is yet swifter and better; but never mind: human nature is like that; and there is no harm, in fact it is just as well, always to want something out of reach.

A car that is superior to the cheapest, yet not necessarily ultra-expensive, gives its owner an outlook on life and the world that is subtly different. The vehicle is smoother and sweeter. Therefore, life also becomes smoother and sweeter. The burden is lifted from one's subconsciousness of having always, when motoring, to put up with substitutes for the real thing. For instance, you have real leather upholstery to recline against in the less cheap car. For these and many other elusive reasons you begin and end your motoring journeys in a more contented frame of mind, and are thus better able to appreciate the beauty and wonder of the world by the way.

Readers can now judge for themselves as to the respective merits of three and four speeds. If you want a car only for use on English main roads, then four speeds are

unnecessary. If you are prepared to pay something near four figures for your car, then again you can get along all right with three speeds. Yet, oddly enough, most large, high-powered cars at four-figure prices are furnished with four speeds.

Now is the time, just after the Olympia Show, when the world is buzzing with motor talk—as once people were wont to discuss horses. Many fascinating novelties have appeared, some of which are destined to disappear, whilst others, especially easy gear-changing devices, will make a definite improvement in the comfort of future motor driving. With features such as these which may contribute to the making of the car of the future I hope to deal some day; but here and now we are concerned with pointers for the choosing of a car in the medium-priced class. Having discussed the number of speeds in the gear box, the number of cylinders in the engine is an even more important question to be settled.

It is only within the last two years that six-cylinder cars have been offered in considerable variety at prices below £500. Their advent was in fact the sensation of 1926, a wonderful effort on the manufacturers' part, which gave a welcome fillip to the motor movement in this country. Transatlantic influence was largely responsible for the coming of these comparatively light and cheap sixes. The number of six-cylinder, as compared with four-cylinder, cars had been increasing rapidly in America. The increase was really more remarkable than actual figures showed, because of the enormous

number of Fords in existence and still pouring out from Detroit, which, of course, all had four-cylinder engines. It looked as though the four-cylinder car in America had not got a dog's chance, except for such utility purposes as the Ford Model T fulfils. The U.S.A., owning about ten times as many automobiles as all the rest of the world, favoured six cylinders, or, at any rate, more than four—we must not forget the "eights" and "twelves."

Is the four-cylinder engine in this country to be confined in future to the very cheapest cars, and/or to utility purposes?

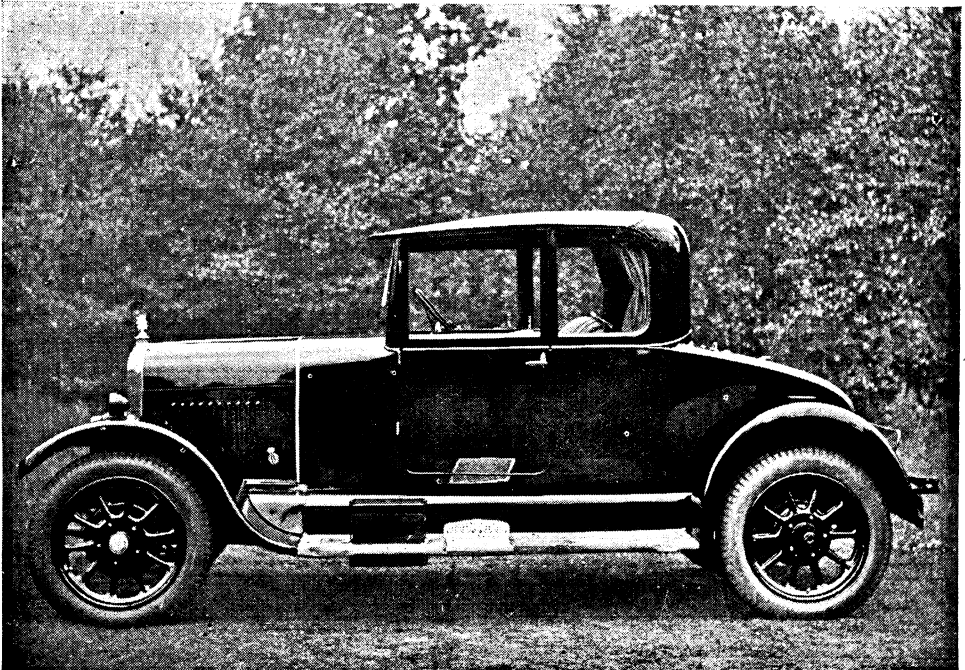
This question is bound to affect your choice, because, if you were to buy a good four-cylinder car now, meaning to keep and use it for several years, and the answer turned out to be affirmative, your car might become hopelessly out of date and so lose nearly all its selling value. But he would be a bold man who gave an unqualified "yes" to the above question, at any rate so far as the motor industry on this side of the Atlantic is concerned.

The introduction of a new model in the automobile world is rather like the production of a new play at a London theatre. It may seem excellent to its producers, yet be badly received by public and critics; or the contrary may be the case, and the car,

or play, turn out to be a gold-mine for its sponsors. It is hard for a new model to gain popular favour in this country; but once it does so, it becomes very firmly established. To take some examples, the positions of the Morris Oxford, the Austin "Twelve" and the Hillman, four-cylinder cars all, have been scarcely shaken by the boom in "light sixes"; and that is characteristic of conditions in England. Moreover, the numerous people who buy these and other four-cylinder cars are not misguided. They get splendid value for their money and do not regret their choice. A successful British firm, when it introduces a new "light six," does not necessarily find that the market for its well-established four-cylinder cars is liable to disappear. For instance, wonderful cheap "light sixes" have now been made for some time by the Singer and Lea-Francis Companies, but their popular four-cylinder models are still continued.

Attention is drawn to these stubborn facts, because what I am going to say about six-cylinder engines might otherwise make you feel that no four-cylinder car can be worth considering in the medium-priced class. This is by no means the case.

When you take the plunge and buy anything so important and expensive as a motor



12/30 H.P. OVERHEAD VALVE GALLOWAY COUPÉ.

car, you must have good reasons. You must know just what you are doing and why. No one would think of acquiring a house without first finding out all about it. Therefore, you can only properly decide whether to buy a four- or a six-cylinder car in the medium-price class after discovering the essential differences. Therefore, if I am to help you at all, I must now go a little way into technicalities.

The story has often been told of how six-cylinder cars, like most other important engineering inventions, originated in England. They were first produced by the Napier Company and Mr. S. F. Edge more than twenty years ago, and perhaps the chief advantage that the makers then sought was the elimination of the "dead points" that inevitably exist in any engine with four cylinders or less: in other words, they wanted an engine the crankshaft of which would give a continuous turning effort. But since those far-off days the speeds of automobile engines have been greatly increased and the weights of their pistons and other reciprocating parts much reduced—the latter being, of course, mainly cause, and the former, effect. Therefore, the "dead points"—when all four pistons of a four-cylinder engine reach the ends of their respective strokes and have to be helped on their way by the flywheel's momentum—now matter much less than they did in the early days. Yet, in theory at any rate, a six-cylinder engine can pull steadily at a much lower rate of revolutions than any "four."

But evenness of torque and pulling power at low speeds are not, in my view, the most important advantages that six cylinders possess over four. The mechanical balance of a "six" is, again in theory at any rate, almost perfect, whereas that of an ordinary "four" is very imperfect. We cannot go far into this subject without the use of mathematics, but it can be explained *grosso modo*. Picture to yourself, when an engine is "revving," the pistons rushing up and down in their cylinders at terrific speeds. When they reach the ends of their strokes, owing to their momenta, a great deal of force is required to stop them and make them go back again; and the geometrical arrangement of an ordinary four-cylinder engine is necessarily such that the forces needed are unequal at the tops and bottoms of the strokes. But in a "six" these inertia forces, as they are called, cancel out almost exactly, so that, no matter how

great the speed, there should, theoretically, be no unbalanced forces tending to produce vibration.

Many six-cylinder engines have been, and some still are, built which are by no means vibrationless. Many four-cylinder engines also are made which are superior in smoothness of running to "sixes" of inferior design and construction. A six-cylinder crankshaft, if it is not rigid enough, or sufficiently well supported in properly proportioned bearings, is liable to distort or "whip" under the great loads it has to bear; and such distortion may set up worse vibrations than those due to the unbalanced forces of a four-cylinder engine.

From what has been said it will easily be seen that the technique of six-cylinder engine design and construction is far more difficult than in the case of four cylinders. It is only in recent years that the difficulties have been so far overcome as to make it possible to bring the price of moderate-powered, six-cylinder-engined cars down to the levels we are now considering without losing the essential good qualities of six as compared with four cylinders. There are difficulties of carburation, lubrication and ignition; evenness of cooling also and the expansion of hot materials enter into the problem. It is indeed a far greater achievement on the part of the motor industry than is generally realised to have brought sound six-cylinder cars down to popular prices.

For a long while I took the view that a good four-cylinder car was preferable to any six at about the same price, that it was best to stick to four cylinders unless one could afford to pay four figures! But I have been converted: I have proved by actual possession and use that the great achievement has been accomplished. Yet, when comparing "fours" and "sixes" of about the same price, do not forget that there are several other important things in a car beside the engine. The gear box we have touched upon: the comfort of the springing and general silence and smoothness of the transmission are scarcely less important. The steering must be easy and true, and there must be no symptoms of "wheel wobble" at high speeds. Brakes must be firm, "crisp" and silent in their action. The driving position must be right for your length of leg, and the pedals must not be heavy to operate. In short, no car can be judged properly without a trial run.



THE PASSING OF ARTHUR.

"No, I'm sorry I can't direct you, mister. Why not ask King Arthur there?"

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

A CELEBRITY RECORD.

By W. E. Richards.

LITTLE WILLIS asked us to pop in and hear his new record, but we all remembered we had prior engagements. He looked so crest-fallen that I added, "You know we loathe the stuff these inflated celebrities sing for the gramophone. If it had been a record of your own voice——"

"But that's just what it is," he squeaked.

Willis has a nice little drawing-room voice which he will display with hardly any encouragement. He sings at bazaars, at Church soirées, and has even been known to sing at the Work-house, which was hardly fair, for the inmates could not go out for a drink while his turn was on.

In spite of all rebuffs, Willis struggled up the ladder of fame. Half his salary was spent on lessons. He affected an Astrakhan collar, a flowing tie, and Toreador side-whiskers. He insured his voice. He cultivated the society of journalists. Everything that could be done was done.

But no amount of lessons and puffs could help a man who piped, "I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul," in a polite little tenor.

He was, on the whole, a decent fellow, and when we heard that the Excelsior Company had recorded his voice, we thumped him on the back.

"You will come to hear it?" he pleaded.
"You bet we will," we cried.

* * * * *

All his relatives were there, sitting as if they were in church. We tiptoed in and spoke in husky whispers.

The gramophone stood in a corner, and we stared at it, and said it was marvellous what strides the instrument had made.

"Of course, it's not perfect yet," Willis added. "I want you to remember that. But every day it gets better. Choruses, for instance, used to be a bit thin, but with this new electrical recording, we get the full effect. This," he explained, "is a bit of 'The Messiah,' sung by the Handel Festival Choir at the Crystal Palace. Three thousand five hundred performers! Think of that!"

We tried hard to think of that.

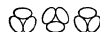
He wound the handle, and there burst forth the mighty chorus, "And the Glory of the Lord." We sat thrilled and numbed, until our eardrums were shattered.

"Isn't that splendid?" asked Willis.

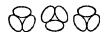
"Top hole," we agreed. "But we didn't particularly want to hear that. We came to hear you. Play the record of your own voice."

"That was it," he said modestly. "I was one of the tenors in the choir."

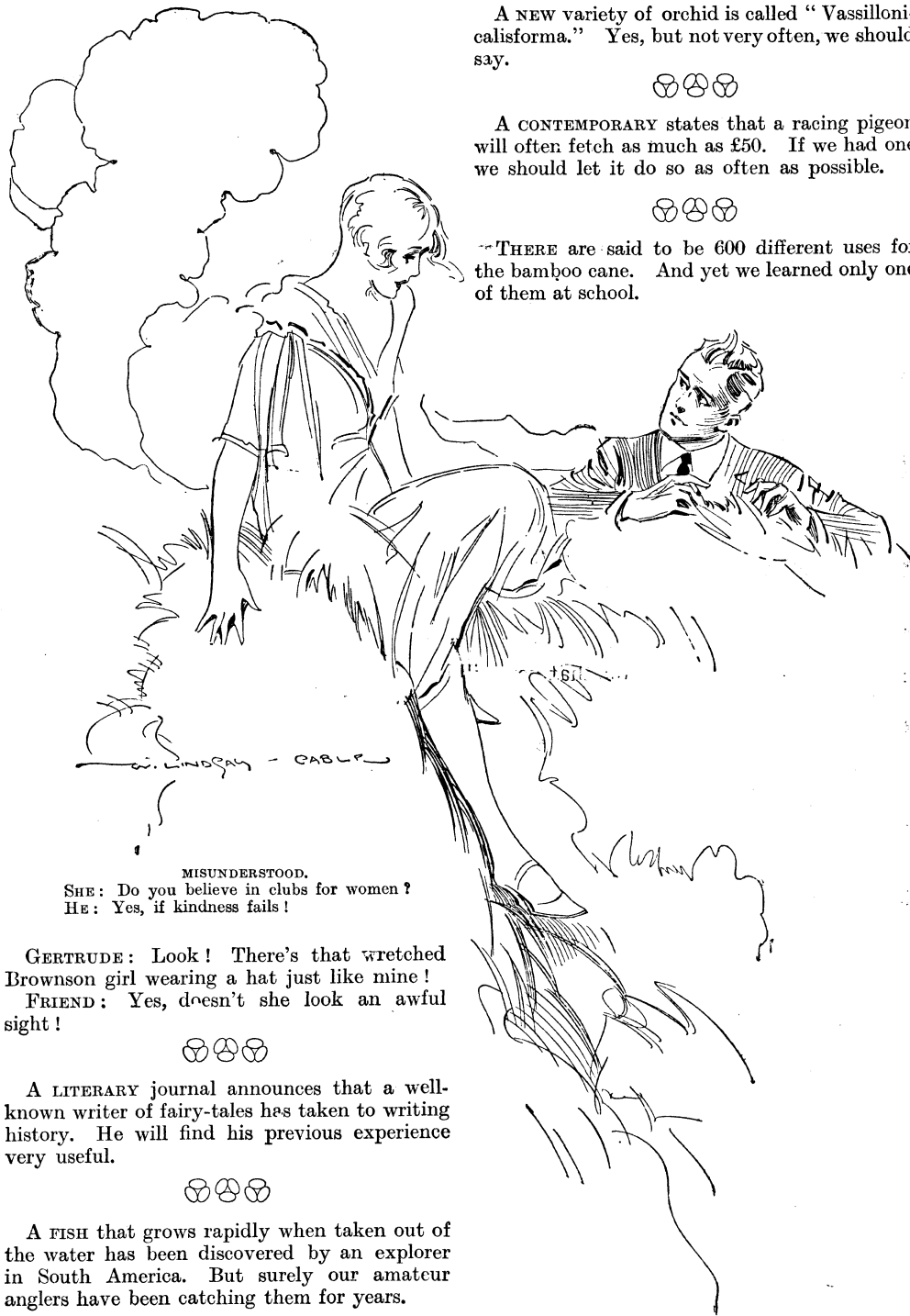
A NEW variety of orchid is called "Vassillonicalisforma." Yes, but not very often, we should say.



A CONTEMPORARY states that a racing pigeon will often fetch as much as £50. If we had one we should let it do so as often as possible.



THERE are said to be 600 different uses for the bamboo cane. And yet we learned only one of them at school.



MISUNDERSTOOD.

SHE: Do you believe in clubs for women?
HE: Yes, if kindness fails!

GERTRUDE: Look! There's that wretched Brownson girl wearing a hat just like mine!

FRIEND: Yes, doesn't she look an awful sight!



A LITERARY journal announces that a well-known writer of fairy-tales has taken to writing history. He will find his previous experience very useful.



A FISH that grows rapidly when taken out of the water has been discovered by an explorer in South America. But surely our amateur anglers have been catching them for years.



"No girl should get married until she is twenty-five," says a lady doctor. But nowadays girls refuse to be twenty-five until they are married.

A MAN who cannot feel pain is said to be living in Manchester. It must be irritating to meet him in a dentist's waiting-room and to hear him laugh at the jokes in the ancient periodicals lying on the table there.

SECURITY FOR THOSE YOU LOVE

A man had been listening to advice on life assurance.

"I'll go home," said he, "and talk it over with my wife."

"Don't do that," said his adviser, "talk it over first with another fellow's widow."

Not a cheerful suggestion, perhaps, but life assurance deals with fundamental facts.

To you, a policy taken out with the Prudential Assurance Company means that you will be saving money for your later years and also that your wife and family will be safeguarded should you predecease them. It costs little—but it means much. It will give you peace of mind—give them security.

For instance, if you are in your 30th year an annual premium of £33 os. 10d. will insure your life for £1,000—plus bonus (the amount increases each year)—and at the age of 60 you will become entitled to an immediate cheque for £1,660.

This example is based upon present-day bonus conditions.

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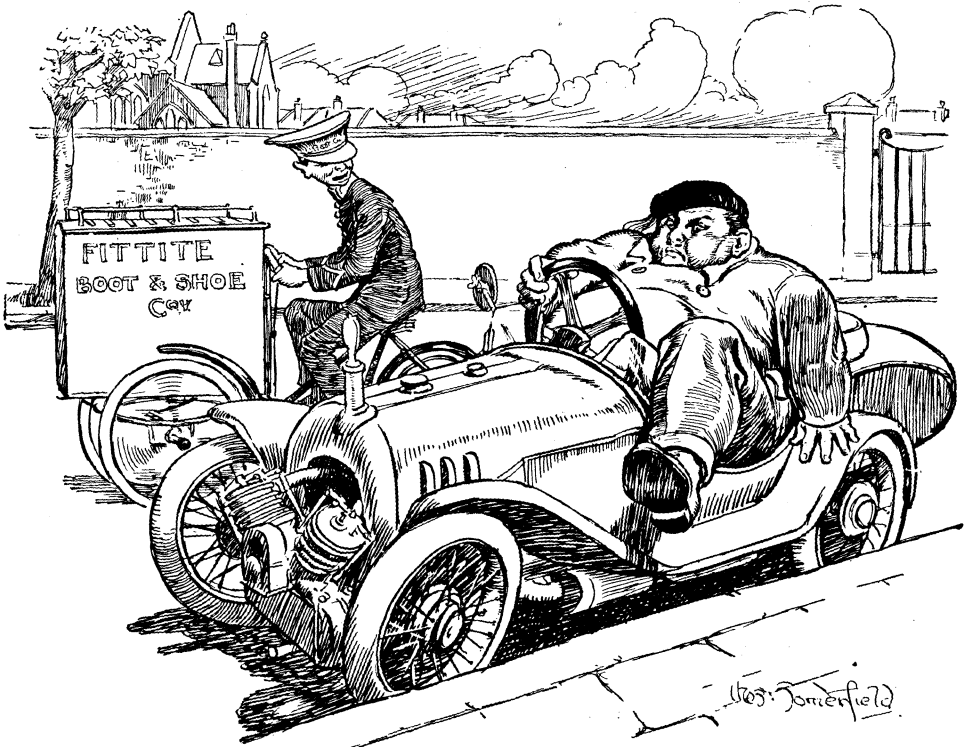
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P.P.119



TRUE ENOUGH.

"How is your wife getting on, John?"
 "Well, miss, sometimes she's better, an' sometimes she's worse. But from the way she takes on when she's better oi be thinking she's better when she's worse!"



AN OPPORTUNIST.

CHEEKY BOY: Like a shoe-horn, guv'nor?

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CONSUMPTION

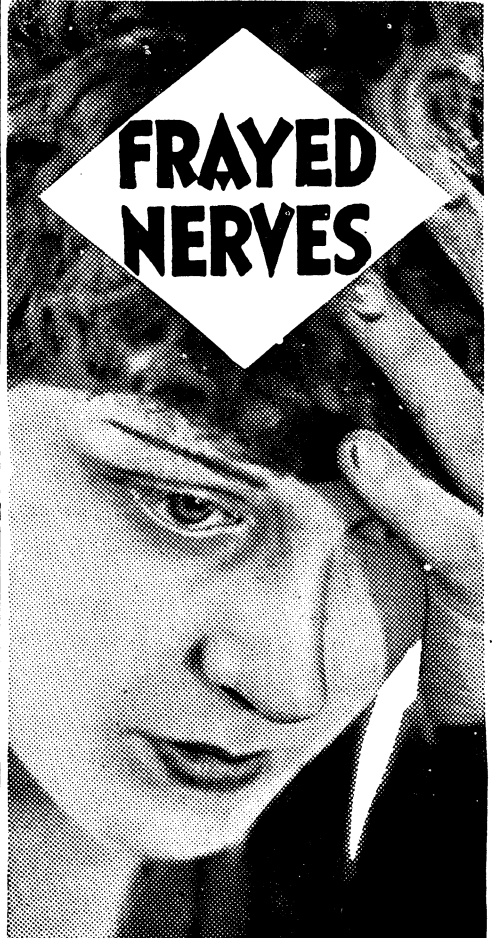
IS IT A MIRACLE?

"No disease is to be found on"
"either lung, the breathing is per-"
"fectly normal. It is so wonderful"
"that unless it is a miracle, it is to"
"be doubted whether the lesions were"
"really so serious as the doctors who"
"treated this patient seem to admit."

The above statement was made by Dr. E. Thomas before the Medical Society of Geneva after examining a T.B. case which had been treated with UMCKALOABO (Stevens). This treatment can be taken in one's own home, no change of air or climate necessary; in fact, consumptive patients seem to get better in the East End of London just as fast as on the high plains of South Africa or in the mountains of Switzerland. Any T.B. subject can have a supply of the remedy sent to him, carriage paid, on the distinct understanding that he will only be asked to pay for it if perfectly satisfied with the benefit received from its use, and considers the progress he has made towards recovery warrants its continuance.

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DR. CASSELL'S

**quickly restore
nervous vitality**

When nerves are frayed by irritants and torn by incessant pain, it is high time you looked for sane and safe relief. Your nerves won't stand the strain for ever—they are literally breaking up. And remember, soothing drugs won't mend broken tissue. The nerves must be **built up**. In other words, you need Dr. Cassell's Tablets, if you want to get rid of your trouble, and not merely tinker with it. Dr. Cassell's supply repair material for both blood and nerves, and aid digestion and appetite, so that the building-up process can go on without delay. Dr. Cassell's ensure real recovery without relapse. Thousands have proved it. Don't get worse. Get better on Dr. Cassell's. Of all Chemists, 1/3 and 3/-.

THE CLOSE OF THE SOUVENIR SEASON.

By T. Hodgkinson.

WE have now come to that season of the year when we have seen the souvenir habit arrive at its most virulent phase and then draw swiftly to its annual decline and fall. Everybody has acquired by purchase, pilfer, or personal risk some visible aid to those happy memories which every holiday should leave behind.

That the souvenir habit is purely a seasonal malady is obvious from the way in which so many of these bringers - back of happy memories take the form of pottery. Instinct guides the collector to them, though at the time he is unconscious of the fact that the healing hand of next spring cleaning will remove all traces of his indiscretion, except, of course, the broken fragments that encumber the dustbin and make the dustman, if at all ticklish, adjust his neck protector with more care than usual.

The passion for souvenirs is planted in the human breast at an unusually early age. Long before he can walk, baby shows a craving for a lock of father's hair, or an extract from his whiskers, and does his little best to collect one. And in early boyhood few of us escape the ambition to bring back with us a deceased starfish to keep fresh (and therefore unlike itself) our memories of the seaside.

If our boyhood's holiday has been spent inland and we are a year or so older, flint arrowheads have an attraction that simply cannot be resisted. In our enthusiasm we find them by the sackful, only to learn from some tactless adult on our return home that, so far from having unearthed a prehistoric Woolwich Arsenal, we

have only supplied a handy filling for the crevices in the crazy paving.

Even this use for our boyhood's souvenirs is not always available. Our elders only too often have the crazy pavement in mind when collecting their own souvenirs. It is this that leads them to acquire (by purchase more often



THE UP-TO-DATE EXCUSE.

FARMER: Hey, there! 'Ow come you to be up my apple-tree?
BOY: Please, mister, I just fell off an aeroplane.

than personal risk) roots of edelweiss and other Alpine rarities. Though our suburb is admittedly of a lesser altitude than the plants are used to, they have the authority of several estate agents for regarding it as very bracing, and they see no reason why mountain vegetation should not thrive there and make our garden next summer an ideal spot in which to yodel.

Except among those people who are content to purchase their souvenirs, plants are probably

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Nothing Serious, but—
well, a warning that your
throat needs attention

If your throat is inclined to be weak, if you are liable to get hoarse after one cigarette too many, or after prolonged talking, you will find "Allenburys" Glycerine and Black Currant Pastilles a boon. Made only from the fresh juice of ripe black currants and pure glycerine, they are manufactured according to an old French recipe of the House. Keep a tin handy. They quickly relieve and soothe the throat and clear the voice, and they are as luscious as they are effective.

They contain no harmful drugs, so they may be used as frequently as necessary with absolute safety.

Your Chemist stocks them

Packed in distinctive tin boxes containing:

2 oz.	- -	8d.
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1 lb.	- -	4/3

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the most popular incitements to reminiscence. We once went on a mountain holiday with a man who insisted on bringing back a three-foot fir tree at the bottom of his bag and was saved from severe treatment at Dover only because no one could say offhand if sticking splinters into an officer of H.M. Customs was a crime, a misdemeanour, or only a breach of etiquette.

Even if such things grow, they often fail in their purpose. You may understand their significance, but your friends are quite likely to fail to grasp it. Few things are more annoying than to find the talk turning on music-hall programmes just because, in your anxiety to make it clear that you have been to Spain, you have remarked that some sickly sapling was grown from a seed-pod gathered in the Alhambra itself.

As a matter of fact, most souvenirs are of doubtful utility. Exotic foreign garments that may look all right in their natural surroundings only result, if worn at home, in unpleasant suspicions among the neighbours every time a more than usually atrocious murder occurs, while a gay and giddy shopping basket from abroad has given many a good housewife an undeserved reputation for not taking her duties seriously.

A china pig, even if capable of putting out its tongue in a singularly vulgar manner to form a yard measure, is never of any actual service in a home already possessing a foot rule, and a carved wood ash-tray has never yet been known to cure a man of his lifelong habit of using the aspidistra pot for the storage of cigarette ends.

Not but what there are useful souvenirs. An ice-axe in the umbrella stand will do as much to intimidate importunate callers as any bulldog, and requires neither an annual licence nor a daily dinner-time. In fact, we have one friend who lived tax free for years simply on the strength of an Indian tomahawk bought to remind him of a happy afternoon at a Wild West Show.

But such sordid considerations seldom weigh with the average souvenir-hunter. To him a thing of alleged beauty is a joy for at least a fortnight, and for the period will seem an ample compensation for the fact that to find room for it in his bag he was compelled to leave behind his sand-shoes, or entrust his second-best pyjamas to the mercy of the post.

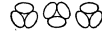
He will refer to it airily as "a little thing I picked up while I was away," and no amount of asking why on earth he didn't put it down again will dim his pleasure in it—till the fortnight is up. Then, as we have said, the mania passes. The day's great thoughts will include a realisation of the folly of living in the past.

Happy then is the man whose Aunt Mabel has a birthday round about that date. A pin-cushion is just the present for her; and if, in addition to his good wishes, it takes with it a whiff of ozone, it will do the dear old lady good and almost reconcile her nephew to the loss of his sand-shoes.

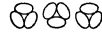
BUILDER: This is the house, sir, in the Tudor style.

PROSPECTIVE BUYER: I don't care for the Tudor style.

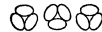
BUILDER: Soon alter that, sir. George! Just bring a pail of water and wash out them oak beams.



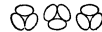
A MONUMENT to the farmer's wife who discovered Camembert cheese has just been unveiled. Meanwhile the first person to chase and capture a Gorgonzola remains uncommemorated.



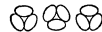
"WHAT happens to the chestnut men in the summer?" asks a writer. They keep on being chestnut men, under the impression that it is the winter.



THERE is only one motor-car on Easter Island in the Pacific. They call the place the Pedestrian's Paradise.



FROM a serial story: "She swept the room with her velvet-black eyes." A very useful girl to have about the house.

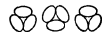


"JAKE says he's never paid a shilling for his motor repairs."

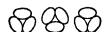
"That's what the garage man told me."



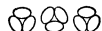
THE cynical reporter again: "The subject of the lecture was 'Fools and Knaves.' There were a large number present."



"Robbers take rent money," reads a headline. It is not often that landlords get their real names into print like this.

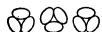


It is reported that when a judge asked the other day, "What is a polony?" nobody laughed. Surely this amounts to contempt of Court.



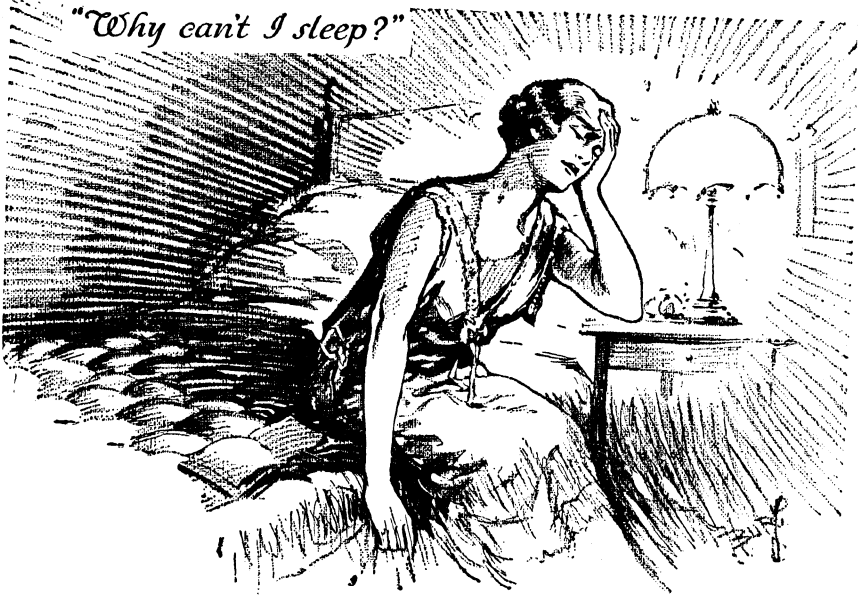
"THAT man at the next table seems to be a vegetarian."

"Yes, we call him the herbaceous boarder."



A WATCHMAKER claims to have discovered the secret of perpetual motion. Does he mean he invented the Charleston?

"Why can't I sleep?"



Good Health depends upon Sleep

PERHAPS you know the nerve-racking misery of lying awake hour after hour, brooding over the day's worries. Have you realised that thousands of men and women like you, when all other means of inducing sleep have failed, found rest and new strength in "Ovaltine," the delicious food beverage?

They have proved what we have claimed—that "Ovaltine" not only induces sound sleep, but also has a wonderfully restorative effect on nerves and brain, supplying new stores of energy and building up the system for the next day's work.

"Ovaltine" contains neither chemicals nor drugs, but is prepared in a highly concentrated, correctly balanced and easily assimilated form from Nature's richest tonic foods—malt, milk and eggs.

"Ovaltine" gives you back the vigour, the zest for work and the steadiness of nerve which you have spent on your daily duties. You wake refreshed and invigorated for another day's work.

No other form of nourishment is comparable with "Ovaltine" for inducing sound, peaceful slumber and replacing depleted nerve power.

Drink "Ovaltine" and you drink good health.

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NOTICE TO BENNETT COLLEGE STUDENTS.

I have already informed you by private letter and otherwise that if you have any complaint you should write to me direct, this gives me a chance of rectifying whatever may be wrong, or whatever mistakes may be made.

Every post brings me letters of thanks and praise, but I am not getting any complaints. Perhaps it is because every student is satisfied, I hope so, but I want you to realise that as perfection is difficult to attain it is always possible to make mistakes, and you are doing me a kindness if you bring any such mistake to my notice.

We teach by post all the Commercial professions, and the Technical trades, and we have expert tutors for every department, but my special department is rectifying whatever may be wrong, and giving personal advice to those people who have any ambition to make progress in the world. There are so many people who are in a rut, or think they are in a rut simply because they cannot see the way to further prosperity. It is my business to show them and to put them on the right path where they can achieve their ambition.

If they have no ambition, I cannot help them, I can only pity them, but to anyone who has any ambition I may be able to give valuable advice, if not, I will say so honestly, but if I can help them, then I will explain exactly how, I will point the road clearly. No matter what your present position may be, if you wish to improve it write to me at this address, tell me how you are employed, what is your ambition, I shall then reply to you by return, and you will not be under any obligation whatever.

These are the subjects taught by post in all parts of the world by The Bennett College:—Accountancy, Advert. Writing, Salesmanship, Army Certificate Courses, Auctioneering and Estate Agency, Auditing, Banking, Book-keeping, Civil Service, College of Preceptors, Commercial Arithmetic, Commercial Law, Company Law, Costing, Economics, English and French, Executorship Law, Foreign Exchange, General Education, Modern Business Methods, Police Entrance and Promotion Courses, Secretaryship, Workshop Organisation, Applied Mechanics, Architectural Drawing, Building Construction, Clerk of Works' Duties, Boiler Engineering, Boiler Making, Chemistry, Civil Engineering, Concrete and Steel, Draughtsmanship, Electrical Engineering, Practical Mechanical Engineering, Engineering Costing, Quantities and Specifications, Foundry Work, Heat Engines, Internal Combustion Engines, Marine Eng. B.O.T., Mathematics, Matriculation, Metallurgy, Mining, Mine Surveying, Motor Engineering, Naval Architecture, Pattern Making, Post Office Examinations, Quantity Surveying, Road Making and Maintenance, Sanitation, Shipbuilding, Structural Engineering, Surveying and Levelling, Surveyors of Works, R.E. Telegraphy and Telephony, Town Planning, Wireless Telegraphy, Works Managers' Course.

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Made in five sizes to suit persons of different heights.

From £1 : 17 : 6 according to length of seat.

Larger sizes : 47/6, 51/6, 62/6, 72/6.

Genuine "Varsity" Chairs are only obtainable from Minty's of Oxford. Write for Catalogue of the Minty Oxford "Varsity" Chairs & patterns of coverings

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LTD

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CARRIAGE PAID
IN ENGLAND
AND WALES.

WHOOPING COUGH

This distressing cough can be immediately relieved. No medicines are taken. Only the antiseptic vapour of Vapo-Cresolene in the bedroom is necessary. Relieves coughing at night and the child soon recovers. For nearly fifty years a standard remedy for Coughs, Colds, Bronchitis, Influenza, Bronchial Asthma and Croup.



Vapo-Cresolene
Est. 1879

Sold by all Chemists. Write for descriptive booklet No. 26 A to

ALLEN & HANBURY'S, Ltd.
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This Plan Will Bring You £250 A YEAR FOR LIFE—FROM AGE 55

Ninety-nine men out of a hundred have to provide for their own future. They have no rich relative to take the burden from their shoulders, and no business pension scheme to fall back upon. They stand or fall on their own efforts.

Are you satisfied with the progress you yourself are making? Have you saved anything like enough to justify a belief that at 55 years of age you will be in a position to take things easier? What about your family, should you, the bread-winner, be taken from them? The plan about to be explained will, if adopted without further delay, relieve you of all anxiety about the matter.

It is the best, the easiest, and the surest way of providing both for your own later years and for your dependents.

Assuming your age to be 35 and you would like to provide for a private income of £250 a year for life commencing at 55, this is how the plan works out. You make yearly or half-yearly deposits to the Sun Life of Canada (the great Annuity Co.) of an agreed sum. And this is what you will get in return.

£250 a Year for Life.

At 55 years of age the Sun Life of Canada will start paying you an income for life of a fixed sum—about £250 per annum—and you'll receive this income every year as long as you live. Or, if you prefer it, you can have a cash sum down of about £3,000. Of course, you haven't deposited anything like that sum. It's the profits that make it so large—profits heaped upon profits, accumulated over the entire period of the arrangement.

Income Tax Saved.

For every deposit you make you receive rebate of Income Tax—a concession which will save you nearly £250 during the period, assuming the present rate of tax to continue. This is additional profit on the transaction.

£20 a Month if unable to Work.

If through illness or accident you lose the power to earn a living, and the disability is permanent, you are excused from making any further deposits and £20 per month will be paid to you until the £250 a year for life becomes due.

£2 000 for Your Family.

Should you not live to the age of 55, £2,000 will be paid to your family, and, in addition, half of every deposit you had made to date. If death result from an accident, the sum would be increased to £4,000 plus half the deposits.

Any Age, Any Amount.

Though 55, and £250 a year for life has been quoted here, the plan applies at any age and for any amount. Whatever your income, if you can spare something out of it for your and your family's future, this plan is the best and most profitable method you can adopt.

£70 000 000 Assets.

The Sun Life of Canada has assets of over £70,000,000, which are under Government supervision. It is in an impregnable position. Do not, therefore, hesitate to send for particulars of this plan, which may mean great things for you and yours.

Write, giving exact age and amount you can save yearly, to J. F. Junkin (General Manager), Sun Life of Canada, 57, Sun of Canada House, Victoria Embankment, London, W.C.2.

*From 32/6 per week to
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ARE you satisfied with your present rate of progress? The Russell Course in Scientific Salesmanship will develop in you the ability to get what you want in the shortest possible time.

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Clynol Berries
For OBESITY.
Price 4/- and 6/6 per package.
From all Chemists.

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KIDNEY TROUBLE and BAD NERVES CURED

Cecil Cured, Carlisle.

Dear Sirs,—I would like to offer my thanks for the great benefit I have received from Urace Tablets. I have been a wreck for over two years, and have been under Doctors, but they did me no good. I tried Urace for three months and I consider myself a new woman; in fact, I can hardly believe I am cured of KIDNEY TROUBLE and BAD NERVES. I would advise others to take a trial of Urace Tablets, and I am sure they will benefit.

Yours truly, Mrs. EATON.

URACE, and URACE alone, can cure Rheumatism. It directly attacks the cause—uric acid—dissolves and expels it from the system and prevents its reappearance. That is why it CURES and CURES QUICKLY. 1/3, 3/- & 5/- per box, from Boots, Timothy White & Co. Taylors, and all Chemists and Stores, or direct from the URACE Laboratories (Dept. 52), 82, St. Thomas Street, London, S.E.1.

1/3, 3/-
& 5/-
per box

**URACE
TABLETS
CURE RHEUMATISM**

**GET
THEM
NOW**



**BE BETTER
NOURISHED ON**

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(TRADE MARK)

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HOVIS LTD.
LONDON & MACCLESFIELD

For cleaning Silver, Electro Plate &c.

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Sold everywhere 6d 1/- 2/- & 4/-

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Send for the booklet that tells you how Inecto recolours your hair in half-an-hour. Inecto is more than a hair-dye—it is a scientific process that exactly matches the natural shade of your hair. You can renew the colour permanently, restore your hair's soft texture, too—at home, with but a single application of Inecto.

The booklet explaining this process is free on request.



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DIABETE-ALBUMINURIA ACUTE AND CHRONIC.

These diseases which had so far been judged incurable can now be cured by the new and famous treatments based on extracts of plants of Doctor G. DAMMAN, M.D. Send to-day description of your case to Dr. DAMMAN, M.D., himself, Sect. D.A.I.—76 rue du Trone, BRUSSELS (Belgium); he will send you a booklet containing all useful details.



The art of smiling charmingly is the art of caring properly for one's teeth. That is why Pepsodent, urged by dental authorities, is also universally placed by experts, these days, near the top of the list of modern beauty aids.

When Teeth are Film-Free Smiles are Charming

*The new way to combat the film on teeth—
which numbers of leading authorities suggest*

MOST persons' teeth and gums are imperilled, say many authorities, by a film that forms on teeth.

Ordinary brushing having failed to combat it effectively, a new way in tooth cleansing is being advised. A way that differs in formula and effect from previous methods—embodied in the special film-removing dentifrice Pepsodent.

Now an effective film combatant

By running your tongue across your teeth, you will feel a film; a slippery sort of coating. Ordinary brushing does not remove it.

Film absorbs discolorations from food, smoking, etc. That is why, according to leading dental opinion, teeth look dingy and "off-colour."

Film clings to teeth, gets into crevices and stays. It invites decay. It is the basis of tartar and must be constantly combated.

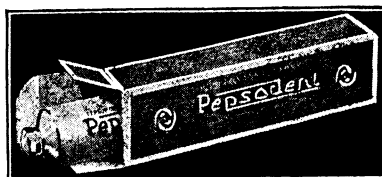
Most dental authorities urgently advise thorough film-removal at least twice each day. That is every morning and every night.

For that purpose, obtain Pepsodent,

the special film-removing dentifrice which leading dental authorities favour. Different from any other tooth paste.

Pepsodent curdles the film, then removes it; then polishes the teeth in gentle safety to enamel. It combats the acids which may cause decay and scientifically firms the gums. It multiplies the alkalinity of the saliva. And meets, thus, in all ways the exactments of modern dental science.

On dental advice, people are adopting this new way of tooth cleansing. Obtain Pepsodent, the quality dentifrice from your chemist. Two months' supply at a moderate price. Use twice every day. See your dentist twice each year. Make both a habit.



2440

PEPSODENT

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Can be instantly raised, lowered, or inclined. The Ideal Table for reading, writing, or taking meals in bed with perfect comfort. It is just as conveniently used with Chair or Couch, and cannot overbalance.

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NOSES—The best improved Nose machines in the world. Remedy ugly noses of all kinds. Scientific yet simple. Can be worn during sleep. Send stamped envelope for full particulars.

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A cold is not good for you—or your neighbour, and a sneeze is an early sign of a cold or a chill, perhaps a severe one.

Heed the first warning and take a sniff or two at your



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*Get a bottle to-day from your
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direct from*

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HAIR TINT

tints grey or faded hair any natural shade desired—brown, dark-brown, light-brown or black. It is permanent and washable, has no grease, and does not burn the hair. It is used by over a million people.



Medical certificate accompanies each bottle. Of all Chemists, Stores and Hairdressers. 2/6 or direct:—
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Quick relief to sufferers from Asthma,
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4/6 a tin at all chemists.

Britannic and Best



See the name "Britannic" is engraved inside the band, because very inferior imitations are offered as "Britannic" Bracelets by unscrupulous dealers.

THE "Britannic" Expanding Bracelet has made an unrivalled world-wide reputation for its durability and the charm of its various designs. These bands are fully guaranteed for five years, and the springs will be renewed, free of charge, any time during that period, through any jeweller.

The "Britannic" may be seen at all good-class jewellers complete with watches in various styles from £4 10s. Also "Britannic" Expanding Bands alone with hooks, to replace straps.

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How to be beautiful—*though* **BUSY**

Never before have women's occupations been so diverse. Yet never before has the general level of feminine charm been so high. Why is it that so many thousands of women can stand the strain of their daily tasks without losing their freshness? Because a few minutes' care each day with Pond's Two Creams keeps their skin and complexion in the pink of condition.

POND'S COLD CREAM

It is most important to cleanse the skin thoroughly every day with *Pond's Cold Cream*. Soap and water are not enough—they cleanse the surface only. Often the harsh alkali in soap is harmful to a delicate skin, particularly after exposure to wind, rain or dust. The pure oils of *Pond's Cold Cream* go deep down into the pores and tissues, soothing and softening—and gently bringing to the surface all impurities. When you remove the cream after a few moments, all these impurities will come away with it, leaving the skin clear and smooth. Do this in the daytime after a spell of work or exposure to the open air, finishing off with *Pond's Vanishing Cream* to give your skin a velvety surface and to hold your powder. Always cleanse with *Pond's Cold Cream* regularly every night before you retire, allowing a little cream to stay on all night if your skin is inclined to be dry.

POND'S VANISHING CREAM

Pond's Vanishing Cream instantly makes you look your best by giving your skin and complexion a rose-petal daintiness—and, at the same time, prevents roughness, redness and all other blemishes caused by exposure. Use it always before you go out—and from time to time during the day as opportunity offers. It forms a perfect base for powder, which goes on more evenly and stays on longer—no shiny noses, no "touching up" in public. *Pond's Vanishing Cream* is a delicious, refreshing cream to use, with a delicate fragrance of Jacqueminot roses.

80 FAMOUS ACTRESSES

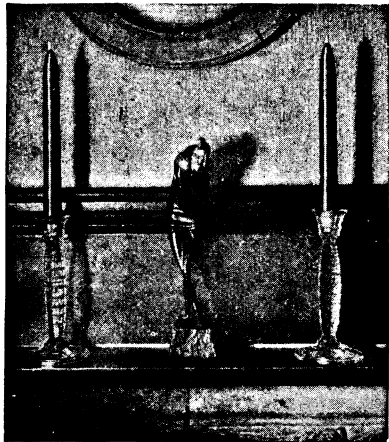
have voluntarily—without remuneration of any kind—expressed in personal interviews their appreciation of the merits of Pond's Two Creams, stating that they use them regularly to preserve their own beauty and charms. Such a valuable collection of reliable testimony

to its merits has never been gained by any other method of skin-care. Follow the example of these charming ladies—and that of countless thousands of others in all walks and conditions of life. Start to-day to prove to your own satisfaction the wonderful effect of this simple, sure method of cleansing and protecting the skin and complexion.

SPECIAL SAMPLE OFFER

Try for yourself this delightful effective method. The proprietors will send for twopence in stamps to cover postage and packing, A TRIAL TUBE of both creams. All chemists and stores sell *Pond's Cold Cream* and *Pond's Vanishing Cream* in handsome opal jars, 1/3 and 2/6, and in tubes, 7½d. (for handbag) and 1/-. The Cold Cream also in extra large jars, 5/-, and in extra large tubes, 2/6.

POND'S EXTRACT CO. (Dept.27)
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*Something
lacking!*

Their room looked cold—empty! Yet there was everything there to make it attractive—everything except

**"NELL GWYNN"
Antique Candles**

Now they have two 10 inch Orange on the sideboard and two 8 inch Jade on the mantelpiece. Last night they had six Nell Gwynn Candles burning on the dinner table. "Exquisite! Fascinating!" said the guests.

In 33 art colours.

From 1/- a box.

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6d. for 4d.

**"OUR NELL"
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is as good as Nell Gwynn Candles. The 6d. tablet is for the present being sold at 4d.

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*Established 1642 in the reign of Charles I.
Makers of Field-Day for Shaving. Leaves the skin like velvet.*



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WHAT enjoyment she derives in preparation—in shampooing her hair with Evan Williams fragrant Henna Shampoo—in brushing it afterwards until it fairly glows with health and beauty. No one realises better than she how much she owes to the "little fourpenny packet."

Evan Williams Henna Shampoo makes the hair healthy as it makes it beautiful.

"Ordinary" for Dark Hair.

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**EVAN WILLIAMS
Henna Shampoo**

3 INCHES TALLER.
Simple height increaser. Will add 3, 4, or more inches to your height; for either sex. Particulars free

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Genuine Thorough Cure in 40 Days.
Helpful Book Free for 2d. stamp.
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YOUR MIND IS THE MINT of YOUR FORTUNE

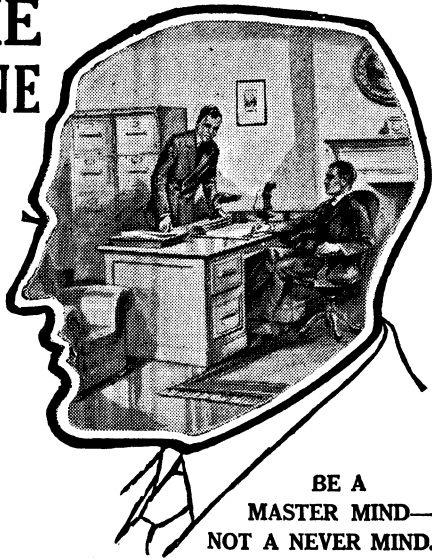
YOUR Mind is the Mint of your Fortune. Equip it rightly and the metal of your ambition shall become the true ringing coin of success. To-day the opportunity is offered to you to plan out your own future and so secure splendid progress in your career.

The intricate machinery of modern Commerce and Business is not to be controlled by the unskilled. It is the trained man only who can assume those lucrative positions of trust which are open to those with ambition and initiative.

Through the medium of the Metropolitan College Specialised Postal Courses you may become master of the technique and practice of your career. Do not stand hesitant in the crowd of those who wait, but pass through the Portals of Training to those posts of high remuneration and executive responsibility which lead in their turn to Control, Mastership, and splendid Independence.

But remember this—the Master Man is Master of his Work. Avail yourself NOW of the generous offer extended to you to-day by the Metropolitan College, St. Albans, which will forward to you on receipt of the accompanying Coupon, a FREE Copy of that inspiring Volume, the 124-page "Guide to Careers."

This "Guide" is a mine of most valuable information for the ambitious, telling much that should be known concerning the many splendid openings in Commerce and the proved quickest, most certain methods of attaining them.



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MASTER MIND—
NOT A NEVER MIND.**

Whether you wish to choose a career or progress further in your present choice, the "Guide to Careers" should be in your hands. It costs you nothing—on the other hand to miss its message may cost you a lifetime's success.

Waste not your opportunities—forward the Coupon in a $\frac{1}{2}$ d. stamped envelope, and begin now the transformation from average to superiority.

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NAME.....
(in Capitals)

ADDRESS.....

Windsor Mag.,
Nov., 1927.

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A delicious product of the famous Kentish Morella-Cherry and the Vineyards of France.

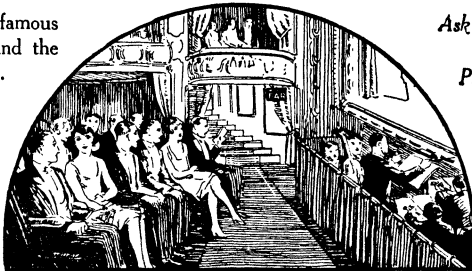
Qualities:

"Sportsman's" Dry.

"Queen's" Sweet.

If any difficulty in obtaining, kindly send name and address of your Wine Merchant to

T. GRANT & SONS,
MAIDSTONE.



Nº 3. "At the Show."

Ask your Wine Merchant and at Hotels, Restaurants, etc.

Put up in Bottles, Half-Bottles, Quarter-Bottles and Flasks.

Other delicious Liqueurs are: Grant's Sloe Gin, Cherry Whisky and Ginger Brandy.

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THE health value of Thermal (Hot Air or Vapour) Bathing is an established fact. Nothing else is so effective in preventing sickness, or for the cure of Colds, Influenza, Rheumatism, Sciatica, Blood, Skin, Liver, and Kidney Complaints. It eliminates the poisonous matters from the system, increases the flow of blood—the life current—freed from its impurities, clears the skin, recuperates and revitalises the body, quiets the nerves, rests the tired, creates that delightful feeling of invigorated health and strength, insures perfect cleanliness, and is helpful in every way.

Every form of Hot Air, Vapour, or Medicated Baths can be enjoyed privately at home with our Patent Safety Cabinet. When not in use it folds into a small, compact space.

Complete, with **SAFETY OUTSIDE HEATER.**

Write for Bath Book, B 5, Post Free.

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A REWARD OF 100 POUNDS For bald-headed and thin-haired.

An elegant growth of beard and hair can be produced when using "Comos" Hair Balsam during 3 weeks. This Balsam causes hair and beard to grow on all bald-headed persons or persons with thin hair. "Comos" is the best product of the modern science of this domain, being the only balsam which really produces hair and beard even on persons of old age.

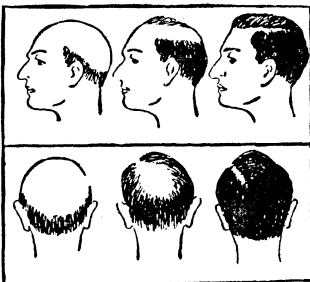
"Comos" brings the dormant Papillae of the hair to grow again after having been used in a few days, and within a very short time you will have a very vigorous growth of hair. **HARMLESSNESS IS GUARANTEED**; if this is not true, we will pay

A NET AMOUNT OF 100 POUNDS to all bald-headed and beardless persons, or persons with thin hair, who have used the Comos-Balsam for three weeks without any result.

ONE PARCEL OF "COMOS" COSTS £1 0 0. TWO PARCELS COST £1 15 0

"Comos" gives to the hair and beard a becoming wave, as well as a soft and delicate texture. It will be sent on application to the head works all over Europe, against payment in advance or against cash on delivery. Out of Europe, payment only in advance.

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How often have you envied brilliant dance pianists? Stop envying—you can be a brilliant jazz exponent yourself in a few months. Billy Mayerl, the world's greatest syncopated pianist, will teach you through the post, in your spare time. Thousands who envied others are now envied themselves, because they took this simple rapid course. Going to join their ranks? **2d. stamp brings free book and full details.**



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Destroyed after use. Re-infection of Patient is eliminated in **NASAL CATARRH, INFLUENZA, COLDS, Measles, etc.** In 2 varieties. *Pure white, soft, "Silky-Fibre," 50 for 2/-.* Also "Papier Crepon," thicker, **50 for 1/9**; also Face Towellettes for removing Face Creams, **50 for 1/-.** Get "TOINOCO" brand at your chemist's (pronounced "Toy-Noco"), or post free United Kingdom only.

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A book that will throw a new and startling light on the possibilities within your grasp—will show you how you can prepare for the **A.M.I.E.E., A.M.I.Mech.E., A.M.I.Struct.E., A.M.Inst.C.E., A.M.I.A.E.,** and any other engineering qualification quickly, and in the privacy of your own home. 60 engineering Diploma (A.M.Tech.E.) courses are described—84 pages of vitally interesting matter to the ambitious engineer.

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At Jelks, Furniture of beauty, of practical usefulness, and *Half the Price yet Double Wear of Cheap New Goods* is always on view.

If you cannot call, write to-day for Special Bargain Booklet.

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MOLLOY WAY ROAD, LONDON, N.7.
Established over 50 years. Depositories 2 to 16
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New Show-rooms now cover a floor space of **800,000** square ft.

Largest stock of new and second-hand Billiard and Dining Tables in London.

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POCKET ADDING MACHINES,
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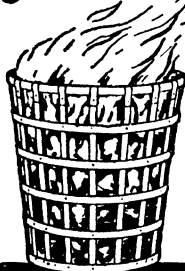
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With neat travelling case and instructions.
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HIRE, BUY, EXCHANGE, SELL

All Makes of Typewriters & Duplicators.
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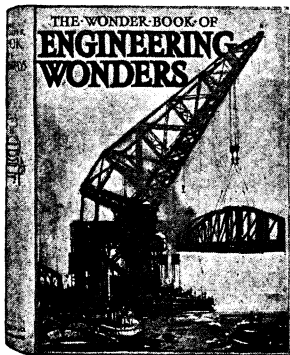
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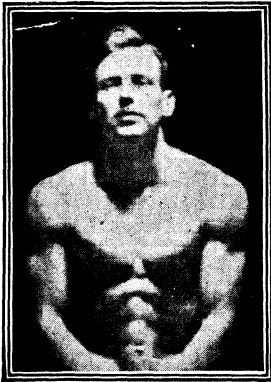
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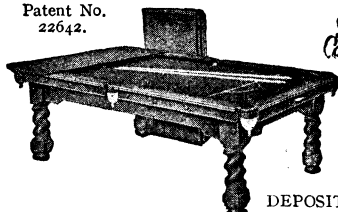
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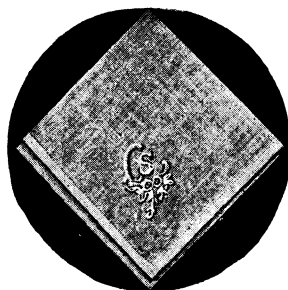
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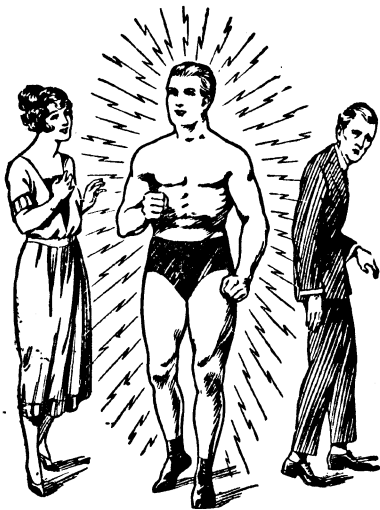
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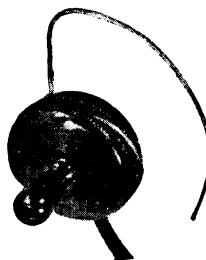
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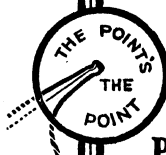
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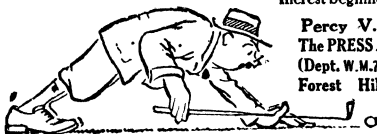
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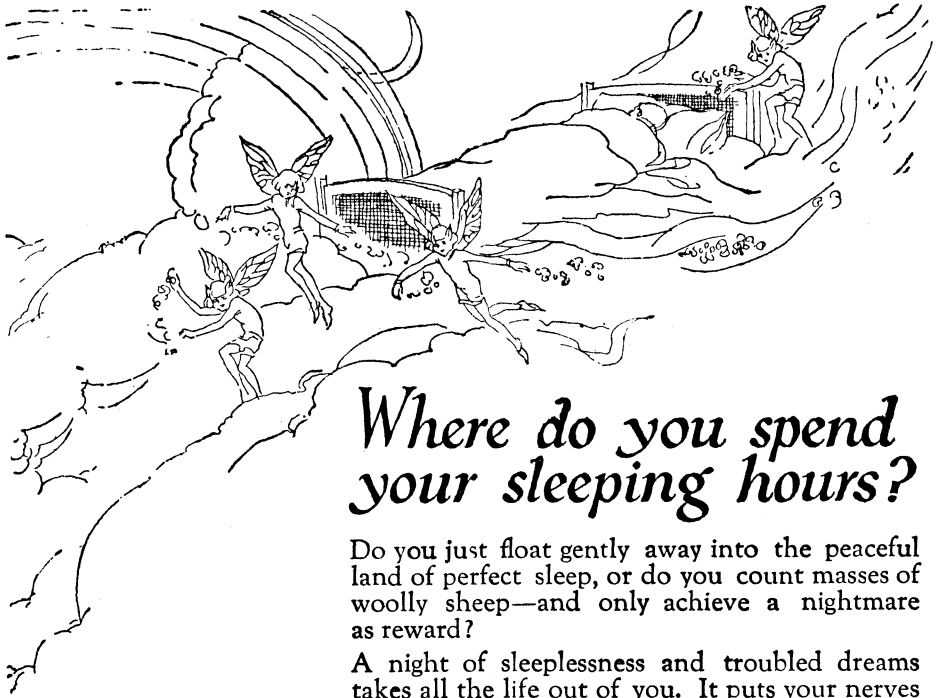
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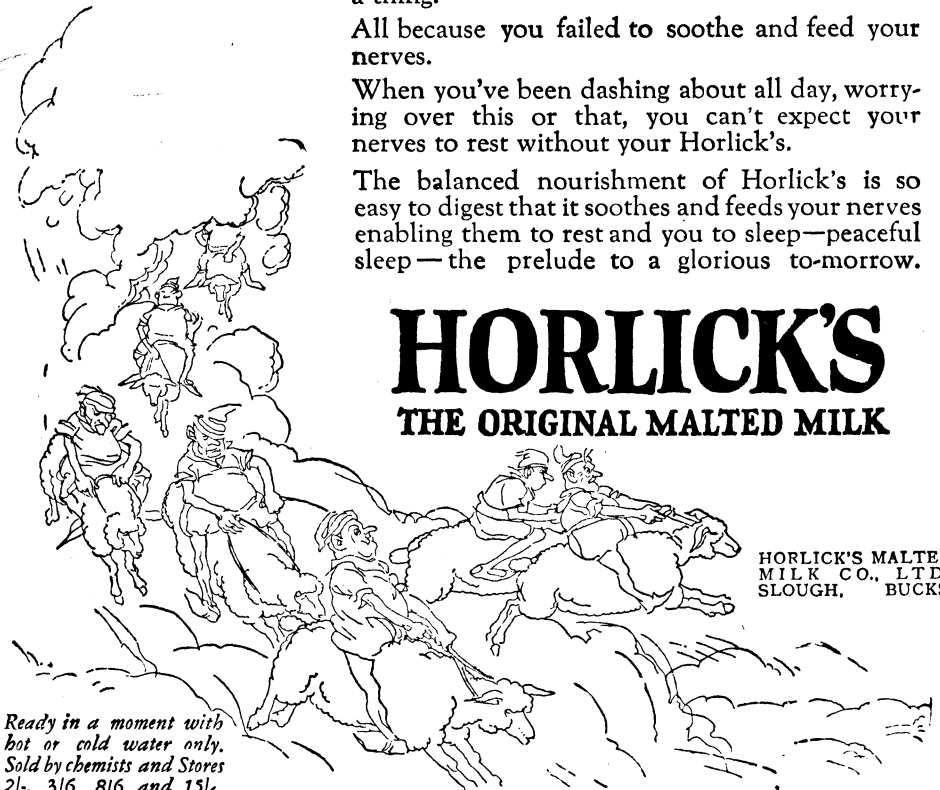
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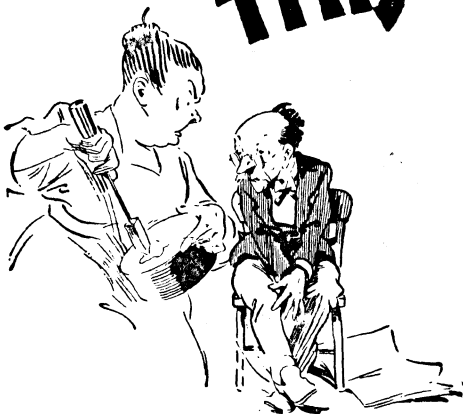
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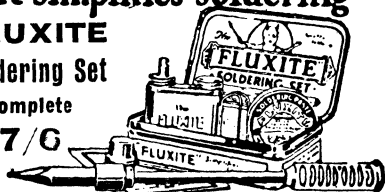
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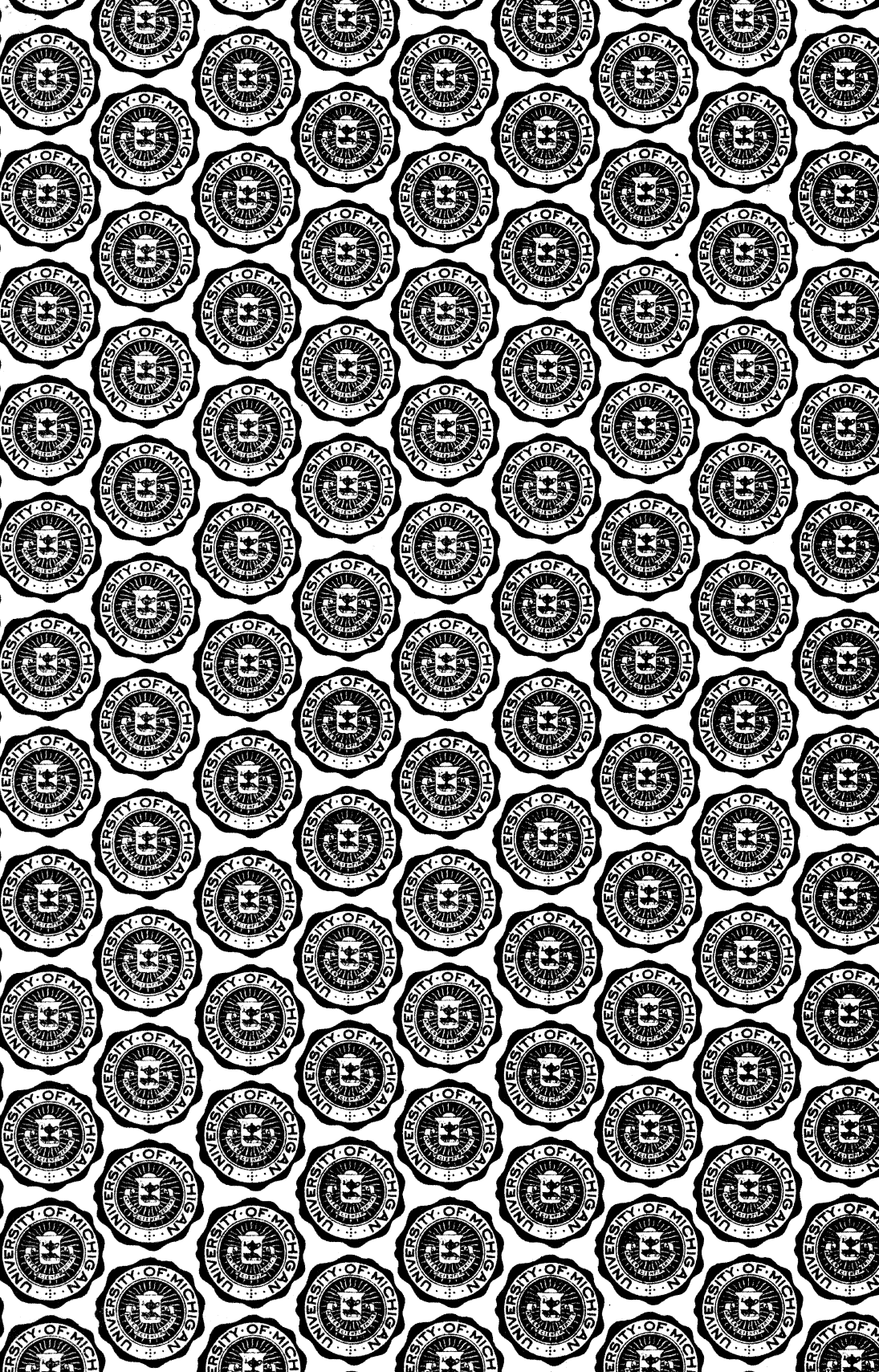


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